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THE CANADIAN SHORT STORY MAGAZINE

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THE QUILL

THE CANADIAN SHORT STORY MAGAZINE

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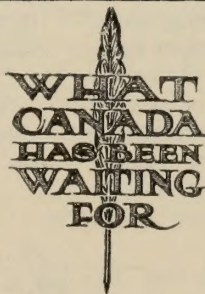
Choice Fiction by Canadian Authors for Discriminating Readers

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NOTICE TO AUTHORS

THE QUILL is in the market for good short fiction, and payment will be made promptly on acceptance for all available stories submitted. All MSS. should be typewritten and accompanied by return postage.

FROM THE EDITOR



EARLY every mail brings to my desk letters of inquiry as to the particular kind of stories *The Quill* wants; and I answer all of them in the same way: *The Quill* wants no particular kind, it wants all kinds—providing they are good stories.

But what is a good story?

I know a newspaper editor who has made himself one of the most successful men on this continent because he has the faculty of assuming the mentality and viewpoint of the average man, and his newspapers are designed to cater to the tastes of the average man. But anyone who attempts to apply that method to the editing of an all-fiction magazine (and many have attempted it) is doomed to failure, simply because, for such a purpose, there seems to be no average man. There are, of course, stories that are liked by practically everyone—we all can name several—but they are the kind of stories that appear only once in a blue moon and you may feel sure that the author who can write one will have no trouble in finding an editor who will be glad to buy it. But it is the exceptional story that has this universal appeal, and for any editor to expect to issue a magazine filled with stories all of which will meet with the approval of all his readers is folly. He cannot even hope that all of the stories will please a majority of his readers. He considers his efforts successful if the majority of his readers find so much in the magazine that they like and so little that they dislike that they will continue to buy and read it. Indeed so difficult is it to issue a fiction magazine having a general appeal that many publishers have abandoned the attempt and are aiming their publications at particular classes. Hence we have magazines containing only adventure stories, or mystery stories, or detective stories, or western stories, or spicy stories.

Such magazines as those mentioned can be successful in a country having a population of one hundred and twenty

millions. For each to secure a circulation in the neighborhood of one hundred thousand is a comparatively easy matter. But Canada has an English-speaking population of about six millions and for any magazine to secure from among that population enough regular subscribers to maintain its circulation at a profitable point is a difficult task. In the case of *The Quill*, it means that the magazine must contain stories the majority of which will please the majority of readers. It must be filled with good stories that will have general appeal.

Upon me, as editor, rests the responsibility of selecting the good stories from the immense number of manuscripts that are offered. If my standard of judgment is correct it will be sustained by you, the readers, and *The Quill's* initial success will continue. And if I fail to please you *The Quill* will fail.

And so I think it only fair to you that I make known the standard by which I measure a story.

A good story, first of all, must be interesting. It must have plot—be fundamentally an interest-compelling incident or set of incidents regardless of the style in which it is written.

Second, it must be brief and simple. A short story is, or should be, the brief report of one main incident elaborated and explained by minor incidents. It should contain no confusing complications and not one word of descriptive matter that is not vitally necessary to a proper understanding of the plot.

Third, its plausibility must be absolute. No matter how fantastic or improbable the incidents reported, they must seem real.

In addition to the above qualities, a good story must contain good character work, and heart interest to such an extent that when you, the readers and ultimate judges, finish it, you will exclaim,—"That was a good story!"

Will the writers of this country continue to supply me with Canadian stories that meet these requirements?



J. Albert Macleary

Law of the Steeps

By ARCHIE McKISHNIE

The author of this story is well and favorably known to all Canadian readers, and he never wrote a better adventure story than this one.



HE man dropped his head in the hollow of his outstretched arm and lay, a grey, inanimate thing, on the slate floor of his prison. On either side of him cold, blue rock-walls lifted themselves towards the strip of azure sky; before him they stood jagged and sheer, and behind him they dropped sullen and cold, shutting out the world, the light, the life that was his no more.

A little way from him the black rock vomited a swift, white stream that sped like a frightened thing across the slippery floor to hide itself in the yawning chasm on the far side. There was no life there; none save the crippled life of the man. Just above his tomb hung a strip of misty sky and beyond it gleamed faintly the stars that never set but grew out into points of scintillating whiteness when the night shadows fell. When after a long time the man turned and raised himself painfully on his elbow he cursed those faint specks of light in wild gibberish and mocked the Maker of them and his prison.

HE was a strange being, this man. His face was white and drawn as though his birth had been conceived of the hard, grey granite of his surroundings. Over it hung a mass of reddish hair, matted and blood-congealed. His eyes gleamed with the fever of his tortured flesh, his hands shook as they groped numbly across the rock floor; only about his mouth there still lingered the pathetic semblance of a human. There suffering had left her finger-prints and the thin lips moved, forming over and over again a name but giving forth no sound.

When the sunbeams fell slantingly down upon him he shuddered and struggled to his knees. He dragged his maimed body to the white stream and drank greedily of the cool water. As he lay face downward on the spray-lashed rock a silvery-bodied fish flashed past him into the darkness and he raised his face and laughed. Surely He who created food for its seekers, was torturing him unduly. He was starving, starving with abundance within his reach. He sat back weakly and looked above him.

The sun was drawing its golden arrows away from his prison. In his delirium he called to them to stay, praying them to linger only a little longer. But they sped from him

and the grey rocks darkened and the deep silence deepened and the pangs of hunger came back with their million little devils to gnaw at his vitals. He threw himself down upon his face and clutched his hair with trembling fingers. The cool spray of the happy, dancing current had, in a measure, wooed back reason and he remembered a long range of green hills and dipping, snow-starred valleys. He could see these hills rising and arching from the tangled pine forest into the chaotic unexplored, wild, free and vari-coloured as the rainbows that hung above the deep fall of the lake that mirrored them. And among those hills and in those valleys roamed the Foodseekers. The white dots on the green were sheep, and they wandered along bright streams where the grass was tender and sweet. Above the valley, on the rocky steep, the wild goats browsed. Higher still where scrub-oak or fissure offered a haven, the mountain lion slept the golden day away and preyed upon the weaker animals at night when a full moon painted silver pathways along the steeps.

He saw the home of the grey-clad shepherd. It snuggled close in a grove of wide-leaved maples, and all about it the wild birds sang and twittered. It was nothing more than a nest in itself, a tiny pile of logs clinging to the hillside. It did not seem lonely, although it was the only human habitation in this wild dominion of the food-seekers. The man saw it plainly. In its open doorway stood a frail woman, her heavy eyes searching the far horizon as though she awaited someone's return. Clutching her skirts were two wee children, a boy and a girl. Their faces were pinched and tear stained.

With a groan of anguish the man broke away from the picture and, staggering up, groped his way back along his narrow prison. He tried to banish the picture, but always it returned, and he saw the hills and valleys, the silver brooks and the turbulent mountain streams and lastly the log nest in the grove where waited and watched his sick mate and his hungry fledglings. And in all that wild, beautiful range of the foodseekers, his babies and mate alone were hungry.

THE man sank down upon the cold floor of his grave. The fever was returning to his parched flesh, and his mind groped blindly



to hold its dominion. That world of hills and valleys was lost to him forever. He knew he could not hope for rescue; there was no one to rescue him, no arm within leagues of this lonely spot strong enough to pluck him from his deep grave. He hoped that his helpless mate and the wee ones would in some way find food; he hoped that they would not watch for him too long. Watching meant anguish for them. He knew that they were safe in the log-nest on the mountainside. None among the fiercest of the foodseekers would molest them. He was glad now that he had never harmed those wild things of the mountains. He remembered once how he had found the lair of a mountain lioness and had longed to carry away one of the little wrinkled-skinned kittens for his tow-headed babies to play with; he was glad now that he had stifled the desire and left the baby lions sleeping in their crag nest among the hills.

Not one among the foodseekers had been given reason to fear him, not one! Stay, yes there was one. Now he remembered, and it was while pursuing this one that fate had tripped him up and flung him broken and helpless in the deep crevice of the rocks.

For many seasons a pair of mountain eagles had taken toll of his spring lambs, swooping in when the mists of early dawn shrouded their approach, and carrying the new-born lambs away to their eaglets in the rocky crypt. He could have shot the fierce foragers many times, but always the brown eyes of the woman pleaded for them, and he laid the long rifle back in its resting place. Then there came a day—was it yesterday or many days ago—that one of the great birds, not content with stealing one lamb, had returned for another. It was then the heart of the shepherd grew hot, and taking the rifle, he stole from the house unseen by the woman. He remembered having marked the flight of the bird, of creeping to the cliff, aiming the rifle at the greater of the two eagles watching their fledglings rend the slain lamb to bits and then—

The undermined sod of the deep gulch had given way beneath his weight and he had dropped a sheer forty feet. Mercifully his twisting body had alit in the deep stream, otherwise he would have been shattered on the stone floor of his prison.

THE night passed and the morning, the third morning of the man's imprisonment dawned. And on that morning another live thing came into the prison of rocks. At first the man, in his delirium, thought the dark-bodied, wide-winged bird that floated down and settled close to him a messenger from the vast unknown, sent to summon him and he was glad. Then the bird screamed, and the

film of creeping death passed from the eyes of the watcher, and sitting up weakly, he poured out broken curses upon the white-crested cause of his woe.

The great eagle sat on a point of rock beside the stream, kingly and unafraid. For a time he rested, his red-rimmed eyes fastened upon the crumpled thing which once he had feared, but which he knew was now powerless to do him harm. He spread his wide pinions and opened his yellow, curved beak as though to utter a cry of victory; but he did not call. How came this one, the omnipotent among the strong and beautiful of all the foodseekers of the range, to be here broken and dying?

Suddenly the bird swooped down above the frothing stream and when it arose it bore a gleaming fish in its talons. It swept low above the man, so close that the wind from its fanning wings cooled his fevered flesh gratefully. When his heavy eyes opened again they fell upon the leaping fish which the eagle had dropped close beside him. He laughed and crept over to the quivering thing. He was still a foodseeker, and one he would remain until the tattered thread of life was rent in twain. He lifted the fish in his weak hands and battered its spark of life out against a stone. He tore the firm, juicy flesh from it ravenously with his teeth, swallowing it in huge gulps. Then, falling back on the shale, he slept.

When next he awoke the stars had faded to faint specks behind the strip of hazy sky, and the day-wind above the mouth of his tomb swept in swishing whispers. The fever of his wounds was at its height now, and his wandering mind bridled the false strength it gave him. He tottered to the stream and washed his battered face and grimy hands in the cold water, and sitting back against the sheer wall of his prison sought to summon his mind back to its pedestal. It flashed back at intervals, fitfully like a dancing ray of sunlight, only to vanish from him as quickly. In his lucid moments he wondered if the eagle would return—if it would again leave him food.

AT the close of that long day the eagle came, but this time it paid no attention to the man. It floated down close beside him, snatched up its trophy from the stream and drifted up and out above the ragged cliff-tops. The man lifted his weak arms towards the darkening mouth of his grave; his white lips moved but no sound came. That night he slept not at all.

Above his prison the heavy storm clouds had gathered, and the big stars could not bend down to mock him. The rain fell in a heavy



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torrent, and he lay face upward drinking in the sweet deluge with its scents of wood and moss and blossoms. All night the rain fell, and at dawn the clouds parted and a ray of sunlight stole into the crypt and touched the white, sunken face of its prisoner. The fever had left him and he slept peacefully, his poor mind, which had groped darkly for long days and nights, at rest. Towards noon he awoke, but he was too weak to rise. Close beside him lay a fish, and he knew that the food-seeker of the gulch had come and gone. For a long time he lay thinking, then from an inner pocket of his buckskin shirt he drew out a metal box filled with matches. He struck one, and it flamed up. He laughed, and, struggling up, sought beneath the overhanging rocks for bits of dried wood and branches which the winds had cast into his prison. Beneath one of the juts he found the brown barrel of his broken rifle. Close beside it lay the shattered stock. He dragged the pieces back with him to the pile of wood and laid them gently on the stone floor, while he prepared his meal. With a piece of sharp slate-stone he scaled and cleaned the fish, then lighting his fire he cooked it over the hot coals by holding it close above them on the ramrod of his gun. The meal was sweet and good and gave him new life. And now he longed to live, to fight his way back to the long range of purple hills, to find once again his nest in the grove and be once more the king among the foodseekers.

HE tried to shout, but his voice was a mere whisper. After all, he asked himself, of what use to shout when there was no one within long miles to hear his call. His eyes fell upon the broken rifle. If only he could patch it up so as to be able to fire it.

He squatted on the rock, and with trembling hands drew the pieces towards him. He ripped off his buckskin shirt and from it cut long strips with the sharp slate stone. With these he bound the broken parts of the gun together. He touched the nipple with his finger and found the priming still dry. From the metal match case he produced a cap and placed it on the nipple. Now he was ready to send a last sharp call that would reach the mate and the little ones who waited and wondered. But before he sent that call he would explore his prison beyond the stream. He realized that the fording of that swift current would be difficult to him in his weakened condition, but holding his rifle high above his head he made the attempt. Once his foot slipped on the slippery rock and the current twisted him about. He felt a million hands gripping at him to draw him into the black cavern beyond, but he braced himself and with a mighty ef-

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fort fought them off. When, at last, he lay panting on the far shore of the stream a sense of elation possessed him. He told himself that if he must die he would die fighting. When he moved on down the narrow gulch he saw no foothold on its sheer walls, and the faint hope which had been kindled in his breast shuddered out. He staggered a little farther along, daring not to lift his eyes to that strip of blue that gleamed faintly above him, lest he curse the Creator of it and the world he had been shut out from.

Despair gripped him and he settled down upon the cold rocks. And as he lay there he saw once again the long, green range, the valleys, all the wild beautiful home of the foodseekers.

He saw his flocks dotting the wide hollows like white daisies, he heard the swish of the leaves above the nest in the maples, and the voices of his children calling in happy play. He saw the wild goats leaping amongst the crags, he glimpsed the tawny coat of the lion flashing from rock to rock. And something else he saw. A strong-winged bird dropping down the track of early morning through the valley mists. He saw the bird snatch up a new-born lamb, whose bleat of terror died even while it was being uttered. He saw the bird soar off and away towards the jagged rocks far beyond the realm of the foodseekers.

In his fancy he followed it as it passed above the nest in the valley. He heard it scream and saw the fledglings of the shepherd cling to their mother in sheer terror of it. He followed it across the kingdom of foodseekers to the brown shale lands and the ragged rock fields; he saw it sail downward to the nest of its mate and young and throw the dead lamb to the fierce-eyed eaglets. Oh, how they grappled it and tore it and feasted upon it, and the great bird screeched its joy and triumph. The eaglets were flesh of its flesh, their hunger was its hunger and the Maker of the world of foodseekers had given it the instinct to rob from the shepherd made in His own image. It rested on the ledge, wings at rest and far-seeing eyes filled with drowsiness.

A long time the broken man lay face downward, dreaming of his old-time world, of his flocks scattered now far among the hills, of his wife and babies and the beauties of his kingdom shut out from him forever.

WHEN he lifted his eyes they fell upon the nest of the mountain eagles. It rested on a smooth ledge half way up the steep wall of the gulch, and the man recalled that he had seen it before, was it yesterday or long ago? It was nothing more than a huge bunch of sticks, and on its edge were perched two wide-billed, red-necked fledglings. As he watched



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them they gave a guttural cry of welcome, and, turning his head, the man saw one of the parent birds swooping home. From its talons dangled the limp body of a lamb. It settled on the ledge, and the young birds fell upon the dead lamb, rending it with their strong beaks.

The great eagle saw the man and, flapping its wings, sent a cry of derision down to him, as though mocking his impotency. Watching the eaglets devour their food, a red mist blinded the eyes of the shepherd; his thoughts once again flew to the shack on the hillside. There, perhaps, were two little human fledglings dying of hunger while the young of the eagles had food a-plenty.

Now a longing to kill this mocking bird that had brought woe upon him surged through him. Slowly his hand stole to his rifle beside him, slowly it was lifted and sighted at the brown breast of the kingly bird who sat unfearing with red-rimmed eyes fastened upon him.

The man's finger crooked to the trigger, in another second the eagle would come crashing down to the rock-floor and—

But during that second's space another memory swept to the man and froze the finger to numbness. He remembered the fish that had been dropped on the rock before him. He could not kill the bird that had fed him.

The rifle dropped and clattered down among the rocks. The shepherd sank his head in his arms and broke into choking sobs. Helplessness overpowered him then, and half dozing, he wandered back to the green world of the foodseekers. Somewhere among those hills he heard voices calling to him. Something touched his face and he lifted his hand to brush it away. He opened his eyes and saw a rope dangling before him. He thought it was a dream, but it was a sweet dream. Weakly he grasped the rope and drew its loop over his shoulders. Then came unconsciousness.

HE opened his eyes beneath the blinding sunlight of the wide open world. Two

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grave-faced men were bending above him, trying to force a fiery liquid between his teeth. He spat out the brandy, and with a low cry threw his arms high.

He drank in the scents of wood and grass and earth in huge delicious gulps, and watching him, the throat muscles of the cow-men tightened and they looked away across the purple hills. They, too, were of the open and understood.

Briefly they answered the dumb question in the man's eyes. All was well in the home nest in the grove on the hillside. The God of the foodseekers had taken care of the mate and fledglings. Every morning He had provided food for the sick woman and the babies by leaving a slain lamb in the valley. The woman herself had told them when they had come riding from the far slope of a region far remote and had found her and the children watching in the doorway of the home. It was beyond their comprehension but they believed it. She had told them how the man had gone seeking the life of the mountain eagle and they had come seeking him; that was all.

The man did not thank them in words, only by the weak pressure of his hands they understood and were glad with him. As the three turned towards the horses standing in a thatch of scrub-oaks, there came a shrill scream from the gulch and a great, white-crested eagle fluttered up and sailed majestically above them. One of the cow-men raised his rifle, but the trembling hand of the shepherd touched him appealingly, and he dropped it again.

For a second's space the kingly bird stood poised above the watchers, then its strong wings fanned the air and it floated upward and away,—out across the dry shale-lands—noble, free, unfearing.

The three watched it until its body melted a tiny speck in the fleecy sky above the purple range. Then they turned their faces toward the far valleys and hills of the foodseekers.

Archie McKishnie, who has many real Canadian stories to his credit, is now at work on a series of mystery stories which will begin publication in "The Quill" at an early date.



A Movie of the Gods

By VIRGINIA COYNE

Here is a story filled with the riotous joy of the Exhibition midway—A comedy with a strong interest-holding plot.



NE day when the gods wanted to laugh they saw Peter. By the way, this introduction is entirely the idea of Peter, who will tell this story in no other way. The gods were sitting this day, he declares, in a huge theatre where upon a screen shadows of mortals continually passed and repassed. By and by in trotted Peter, and they all laughed.

"Look at that nose!—Isn't he a cuckoo?" cried Mercury.

And with that he projected something into Peter's path upon the earth, and the fun began.

PETER was in no laughing mood as he paid his admission at the fair-ground gates. Yesterday his assets were one wife, five children, and a job worth forty dollars a week—to-day his liabilities totalled one wife, five children, job—zero: all this because his employer wanted young blood in place of the old faithful corpuscles that had spent themselves for ten years in his service. Had Peter been a Turk with a whole harem of wives, each with five children, he could not have been more depressed. Poor fellow! Forty-six years old, with five healthy little Marigolds to feed, a slender bank account, a sixth little Marigold on its way to a delighted but hungry world—what was the old blood to do now?

"Exter!" yelled a newsboy, "Lady Jonson's purrel necklace stolen! Ten thousand dollars reward! Picture of necklace on front page! Exter!—Yes, sir. Paper, sir?"

"My word!" thought Peter, stealing a glance at the front page of his neighbor's paper, "fancy anyone flinging ten thousand dollars away like that! It's enough to make a socialist out of one."

Ten thousand dollars for a necklace—while he could not have come to the Exhibition if he had not been given a ticket! He dared not spend a cent here—the money in his pocket was for tomorrow's groceries—yet someone had ten thousand dollars to squander for a necklace!

Miserably he wandered through the buildings, listened to the band in the central campus, glanced at the speed-boats on the lake, and finally, his duty done, wandered off

towards the east gate, intending to leave by that way and walk home.

A merry-go-round, suddenly exploding into nasal life, awoke him from a heavy reverie. About him beat the midway. Everywhere was the billowing of tents and countless cries from little booths. He was besought to "win a doll, a googly-eyed baby doll," while from the Red-Hots' tent nearby came the illuminating shout, "Woof, woof, woof! We're hot! We're food! Oh, boy! We're good!"

Peter stood blinking. Yonder was the exit, somewhere behind these red-faced, grinning crowds with their idiotic balloons and baby dolls. Ugh! How had he ever laughed at this midway? Patiently straightening his hat, knocked awry by a colt of a boy who bore on his cap the request, "Kiss me, Kid. I'm candy," Peter stepped forward—and stopped. He says now that at this instant he appeared on the screen before the gods.

"Isn't he cuckoo?" cried Mercury, and he dropped a dime in Peter's path.

At the time it just looked like a worn piece of silver tumbled from someone's pocket. Instantly his spirits rose. To find money had always brought him luck; besides, he could now try his hand at one of the booths and perhaps take something home to the children. Choosing one which announced "Everyone gets a prize here," he caught a celluloid fish in a crowded tank. His prize was a shallow box of chocolates, which he tucked in his pocket. Mrs. Marigold loved chocolates.

About him the midway clanged in the sun and Peter hastened to leave. It was with no evil intent that he slipped behind the great tent of the Diving Venuses. He had no desire to pry upon damp damsels. In all innocence he desired only to pass from the midway to the quiet road leading from the livestock buildings to the east gate.

He came into an area filled with bell-tents, obviously the habitations of the Venuses. Peter had never thought of performers as eating or sleeping or dressing; to him they lived a marionette existence on the stage and were probably suspended on nails between acts. To stumble in this way upon their domestic life was, therefore, very distressing. He blushed deeply, he said "ahem," and was about to re-



turn to the midway when the gods (or so he says) who had been looking forward to this moment ever since he found the dime, clapped their august hands and the play began.

A MAN appeared violently from behind a tent. Apparently overcome by terror he ran towards Peter, thrust a small, oblong parcel in his hand and took to his heels. Mechanically tucking the gift in his pocket Peter hurried after its donor, but with one wild look behind him the man whirled out of sight into the seething midway.

"Bless my soul!" said Peter, stopping to stare at the spot where the man had vanished.

"Hey! Come 'ere wi' that box!"

Peter leaped about. It was more like a bellow than a shout, and the fellow was more like a gorilla than a man. He seemed to be one of the numerous "props" of the place, for he was clad in a faded jersey from which issued arms and shoulders like hairy tree-trunks. If the other man had aired his heels before two such appendages Peter did not blame him.

"Hey! Gimme that box!"

Peter looked at his hands. They were empty, of course. In his confusion he faltered, "What box?"—and bounded back in time to accept only the partial force of a vicious punch on the nose.

"I'll knock your block off," roared the gorilla. "Gimme the box!"

A surge of indescribable feeling swamped Peter, such as he had not experienced since as a child he had whipped the school bully. "Right-o—take this box," he returned, planting his fist with all his strength in the gorilla's vast stomach. Taken unawares in this effective manner, the enemy sprawled roaring upon his back, and without further parley Peter headed for the midway. "Is this a dream?" he thought as he flew; but the gorilla was upon his feet in a moment, ducked through the tents—and the dream turned to dreadful reality as Peter found himself cut off from his goal.

He turned back and dashed into a labyrinth of canvas, where for fully a minute he desperately doubled and dodged. Involuntarily it occurred to him as he tripped over a rope that he had often sat in happy laughter and watched such pursuits as this upon the screen. He believed they called these things comedies!

His legs were giving, his breath was going, when by a final spurt he rounded a tent unseen and burst into it with a sob. The merest chance had kept him from falling over a table that was just inside the flap. Crawling to a crude wardrobe he hid himself behind the folds of some feminine apparel. A second later he heard light, running footsteps out-

side. He smothered his gasps with a convenient petticoat. The footsteps hesitated, stopped, and went on; returned, circled about, ceased right before the tent. A hoarse voice swore expertly.

WHEN the sounds of the gorilla's departure had died away, Peter stole from his retreat and nerved himself to brave the air. But before he could leave the tent new sounds petrified him—women's strident voices rapidly approaching! The performers were seeking their tents. Merciful heaven! Suppose someone should enter this tent! He bounded into the wardrobe just in time. Scarcely had he finished agitating those awful feminine garments when a voice shrilled outside, "I'll say so! It aint no joke bein' a divin' Venus these chilly days."

A trembling of the tent!—a shaking of the floor—water going drip, drip, drip, from every inch of a large body! Peter put one eye to an opportune button-hole, and closed it in confusion.

"Ahem," he said.

He felt her start. He heard her sniff nervously. He almost expected her to chant "Fee fo fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman." Instead of which, she said to herself in a frightened voice, "Gosh! I could have sworn I heard someone cough." Since nothing happened, however, she apparently recovered, and went on with her toilet. After he had crouched there, trembling, for several hundred years, she walked over to the wardrobe and mused before it.

"I guess I'll wear this one."

"This one" hung directly over Peter. Its identity was unmistakable since she laid her hand on it as she spoke. Before his eyes flashed his whole blameless life. He saw himself dragged to court as that loathsome thing—a masher; he saw his wife's grief—his disgraced family; he saw—

"Hey! Lucile!"

Ye gods! Was this a nightmare? Or was that the voice of the gorilla?

In a trice the woman had snatched her hand from the hook, and Peter's agonized eye watched her fling a kimona about her shoulders just as his enemy leaped panting into the tent.

"We're in one h-l of a mess!" he announced.

"Joe!" she squealed, "Is it the police?"

At this word Peter, smothering in the wardrobe, nodded his head in terrified satisfaction.

"No, it ain't the police," mocked the gorilla, "It's it's"—here he choked in sheer rage—"It's been stole, that's what!"

"Go on," said the woman in a dangerous voice. "Who done it?"



"So help me, it has been stole," he blustered.

"Uh-huh," she said ironically.

"My Gawd, these women will drive me dippy," he bawled, "Ain't you my partner? Have I ever double-crossed you?—I tell you it's gone!—I was in here lookin' at it, sittin' at that table—"he nodded towards the flap, "and not dreamin' anyone was watchin', I put it in the box and laid it down while I reached round for a match—and when my back was turned this guy put in his hand, grabbed the box and beat it."

"Go on."

"I did, but when he seen me comin' he got cold feet and wished it off on a guy with a far-away look and a beak. This new bird flapped one wing and took me by surprise. Then he pussy-footed away and I ain't saw him since."

"What peculiar language," thought Peter, trying not to breathe. To his dying day he will loathe the very name of orchid perfume in which Lucile had apparently bathed her garments.

WHETHER the woman believed her confederate's story was not apparent in her question, "Who took the —?"

"Never mind any name. Call it It," said the man quickly.

"You're right," she said in a friendlier tone, "who took It, then?"

"Never seen the guy before in my life. Might be a member of Stevenson's gang. They were after them—It—too."

"Well, what are we goin' to do?"

"Look for the second guy," said Joe ominously. "You'd ought to have heard him say 'What box?'" Admiration struggled in his voice. "He's a real crook, he is."

("My word!" thought Peter, wriggling.)

Joe shuffled his feet. "Well, I'm off. Meet me at the Racin' Dips—Aw, don't be sore, Lucile. We'll get him alright!"

He departed with horrible promises.

The woman swiftly pinned up her damp hair, rouged her blue cheeks and made her way again to the wardrobe. With the obstinacy of her sex she still clung to her first choice, took down the dress over Peter—and gazed straight into his intense orbs! Then a yell of such duration issued from her mouth that it was like one of those good old pedal notes in a Bach fugue, and Peter had time to pop much of the dress into her, like a cork. It pained him to lay hands on a woman; but the Diving Venus was almost twice his size and the push that upset her upon the floor was his only means of gaining the flap of the tent.

AS he dove out into the open he observed the effect of Lucile's shriek. From every

tent heads were sticking like cabbages. Luckily she chose to remain in seclusion—probably from a desire to conceal her somewhat dubious interests—but although invisible she showed her feelings in a series of amazing howls which brought forth a chorus of "What in the name of Pete is it?" from the cabbages. Peter might have escaped unnoticed in the confusion if Joe's gorilla-like person had not bounded into sight. The instant Peter saw him, he saw Peter.

Throwing all pretence of respectability to the winds, Peter dodged behind a tent and wildly set his legs in motion.

"Stop thief!" bawled Joe.

"Hooray! Stop thief!" yelled the cabbages, tumbling, such as were dressed, out of their tents; and in a second a hue and cry was after him.

He reached the midway with several yards to spare, flung himself into the densest crowd he could find, and wriggled in like a worm into the core of an apple. The hue and cry went by. He could hear faint cries, "Stop thief!" tossed here and there like chips in a whirlpool. In spite of the insinuations of two young misses on whose toes he had stepped that "these old married men sure did love dancing girls," he was beginning to enjoy a sense of snug security when a cold feeling in his back warned him that the hue and cry had taken the crowd away and left him conspicuously uncovered. He sought to wriggle in still further, but there was little to wriggle into, for he was already nearly at the platform. There was only one thing to do, and much as he hated to waste a quarter on Zuzu and her Dancing Dollies he hurriedly bought a ticket, entered the half darkened tent, and settled thankfully down on a bench.

He was almost enjoying himself when he saw Joe, not six feet away, on the same bench, glaring at him like a wolf.

"I followed you in, bo," he remarked with a fiendish grin. "Move over, will yer," he requested the half dozen people who separated them, "I want to sit with me pal."

As they obligingly moved over, Peter was turned to ice. Then he arose, stepped across the bench, stepped over a small child on the bench behind, and dashed for the exit.

"My land!" gasped the child's mother, "My Land!"

A frenzied glance revealed Joe out in the aisle, taking immense strides after him. Peter leaped for the door—and here he had an inspiration.

There were two openings in the tent, an entrance and an exit. Leaving by the exit he dashed in again through the entrance, pressing a dollar in the astonished door-keeper's



hand and a finger on his own lips as he flashed by. So adroitly was this done that Joe, coming blinking into the sunlight, only saw that his prey had vanished and posted up the street after him.

Peter made his trembling way to the empty back bench and sank down with the limpness of a wet towel. His mind was a quivering blank, but a blank coloured with the conviction that to go out again into the gaping, staring midway was forever impossible. Here would he stay and take roots and send forth shoots. Here in the friendly darkness of this impassive tent would he hide from the light—and possibly be found starved to death on the last day of the exhibition.

HIS wandering eyes fell upon a tear in the canvas side of the tent. Peter came to life with a jerk. He looked around—he was unobserved. Cautiously he crept along the wall towards the tear. Alas! So soon do we degenerate that he did not even blush for the furtive glance he cast about as, grasping his opportunity, he ducked through the tear and left Zuzu behind. Again he found himself behind the midway though across the street from the Diving Venuses in an arid region of tin cans, papers, and rags which seemed to be the dumping-ground for the whole exhibition. Sure that his troubles were over now, he dusted himself off and walked quickly behind the tents.

Everything went well as long as they lasted, but he came at length to the skeleton form of the Racing Dips. He was more conspicuous skulking behind this attraction than if he came boldly forth, besides it was very near the midway exit. He came out, therefore, with a heightened color and looked towards the gate. It was nearly six o'clock. Most of the crowd had sought the esplanade benches or the dining-halls and the midway was correspondingly deserted. No one seemed to remember him and his spirits rose enormously. With security came the realization that in his pocket was a box of some peculiar value to Joe and Lucile. It did not belong to him, to be sure, but he was equally certain that it did not belong to them. Pending its surrender to the police, he was consumed with sudden curiosity to view its contents. (He had, of course, completely forgotten the pair's rendezvous at the Racing Dips.) Drawing the box from his coat, he opened it.

WHATEVER those contents were they had a marvellous effect on Peter. His mouth fell open; his eyes became amazed moons. He clapped on the lid, unable to bear the sight a moment longer. He pulled it off and had another look. Then he closed the box dizzily.

While he was storing it away in his right-hand pocket he caught sight of Joe and Lucile taking revengeful strides from the other side of the Dips. Peter's heart flopped. He sent a hunted look about for shelter. He knew now that they were thieves and that the law was with him; but he knew, too, that Joe had called him a "real crook." Under this circumstance it was perhaps as well that there was no policeman near. Suppose he called for help and they were all taken to jail? Brrrrr!—With a shudder he fled into the enclosure that led past the ticket-booth of the Racing Dips.

"Tickets," he moaned, throwing down a dollar. Over his shoulder he saw Joe take rapid counsel with his partner and close in behind him.

"Let me in—quick!" croaked Peter at the turnstile.

Safe on the platform, he looked back. Joe was at the ticket-booth, and Lucile had taken her stand with revengeful countenance at the exit. Then hope gave a feeble flop and expired. He had scarcely strength enough to crawl into a little red car and be pushed off on his journey.

It was a hopeless journey, just a whirling, breath-stealing, horrible interlude from which he returned in limp anguish to find Joe waiting grimly on the platform.

"Here I am, bo," he snarled, "Move over!"

There was no help for it. Peter moved, or rather, was thrust over and the car went again on its way. He could only stand up as they climbed the first hill and look blindly about for a spot on which to lay his bones. Viciously a hairy hand grasped his collar and jerked him back into his seat.

"If you jump you'll be arrested," Joe growled. "And if you jump *now* you'll break yer bloomin' neck."

This was too true. They had reached so horrible a height that Peter shut his eyes and wilted into his corner.

Apparently two people alone above a shrieking world, they paused on the brink of the first abyss.

"Now!" said the gorilla huskily.

Peter withered.

"I said *now*!"

Whang! Down they dropped into the depths and poor Peter clutched his stomach with a faint "Ow!"

"Now what?" he asked feebly.

"Give it here! I mean it"

"Ow!"

Peter's stomach was turning somersaults, for their car had been put on its mettle by the first plunge and was straining all the laws



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of gravity in an effort to overtake its fellow on the other track. Joe took him by the throat and was endeavoring to thrust his hand into his pocket when they caught up with the car they were ostensibly racing and he was forced to sink back into his seat.

"I gotta gun," he said from the corner of his mouth, "You wait!"

In his agitation Peter let go of the rod that held him down and floated airily down a canyon an inch or so above the cushions. Gravity asserted itself at the bottom; he crashed into his seat, and said "Ow!" hopelessly.

"Are you gonna wait?"

His spine crept, but he clutched a pocket and was silent.

AT the platform, not knowing what else to do, Peter handed the attendant another ticket. This time the car had two other passengers, and though Joe intimated that he wasn't afraid of no one and would just as soon bore a hole in him then as wait, nothing was done about it.

At the platform Peter dizzily handed the attendant another ticket.

Joe had some difficulty in producing the necessary fee, but a stream of small silver was at length forthcoming and they went on again.

"Enjoyin' yerself?" asked Joe bitterly. Then he squinted over his shoulder and grinned. They were all alone in the car! Now was the time! Wildly Peter rolled his eyes and his hand went into his left coat pocket.

As they crawled up the weary first hill something hard and smooth was pressed against his ribs.

"Time's up! fork out—or I'll prove there was a suicide in this car!"

"I won't!"

"I'm sick of this! Give it here or I'll blow you in two! Three counts!—"The revolver burrowed further. "One—two—"

"Here! Take it!" babbled Peter, struggling with his pocket.

But before Joe could clutch at the box in his hand they flew down the first dip. Up went Peter's arm and the box flashed over the side to lie outside the framework. Swiftly Joe marked where it fell, bitterly he accused Peter of doing it on purpose; but Peter sat shrunken in his corner and said nothing.

The car had scarcely stopped before Joe was through the gate. Peter was about to make the same haste in another direction when he spied the injured Lucile still standing guard by the exit. With the tail of his eye he marked Joe tearing around the Dips towards the box. Was he still trapped?

When in doubt, act! When in danger, attack! Were these the famous words of some general, or had he made them up himself?

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Act! Attack! He approached the exit.

"Let me by, woman," he said in an unsteady voice, "I'm going for the police. You understand me—the police."

Open Sesame! The woman shrank back, not far, indeed, but far enough to let him squeeze past. He went on, not daring to run for fear of attracting attention to himself, praying for a crowd at the gate. This wish was partially gratified. He collided with a very stout woman who grasped him cordially.

"Why, Peter Marigold!"

"Damn!" he said to himself, "Aw—how are you?" And he strove to extricate himself.

"Don't you remember me, Peter?" she asked reproachfully.

"Er—aw—of course. How are you? Good-bye!" And he strove to push past.

"I'm Sarah Hughes, Peter."

"Sarah Hughes. Of course. Pleased to meet you, Hughes—I mean, Sarah." Peter cast a frenzied look behind and saw that Joe had rejoined Lucile and was talking to her fiercely in gasps. "Goodbye!"

"Mr. Marigold is a very old friend," Sarah Hughes explained coyly to her friends, "Peter—I would like you to meet Miss—and Mrs.—and Mrs.—and Miss—"

There seemed to be hundreds of them, they were all fat, and what their names were Peter never knew. "How do you do," he chattered, "Goodbye!"

He looked over his shoulder.

"Why, Peter! You might come around the midway with us. We really need a man here."

THEY needed a man! As much did a fleet of dreadnoughts need a canoe! But why dwell upon it? He found himself walking up the midway again in their midst. Up the midway, mind you, not away from it!

"I suppose you're married now," prattled the detestable Sarah.

"Yes. Yes." Peering over his shoulder Peter was horrified to see Joe and Lucile trotting at his heels. "I have five wives and a child."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Aw—I mean—I have a child and five wives. I mean—aw—GOODBYE!"

Bursting from them, he bolted into the shelter of Red Mill, which they were then passing, and with his last quarter was received inside.

"My!" gasped the dreadnaughts, "Did you ever!"

"Let's follow him, girls," cried Sarah, "Poor fellow! His brain is quite gone."

As Peter waited for a punt, Joe and Lucile came and hung over the fence.



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"We'll be here!" snarled Joe, tapping his pocket significantly.

"We'll be here!" Lucile echoed grimly.

He had no doubt they would!

By the time Sarah Hughes and her friends had bought tickets for the Mill, Peter had disappeared into its maw. Their alarm may well be imagined, for they feared that, demented as he certainly was, he would drown himself in the tunnel or commit some similar imprudence. Can they be blamed for crowding around the attendant and frightening him very much?

"Hey, Bill!" he shouted to the man at the exit. "There's a crazy man gone in the Mill! What did he look like, ma'am? Hey, Bill! He looked like a professor or something, only wilder!—"

In sixty seconds Peter was a marked man.

NOW inside the Red Mill was a winding, watery tunnel, threaded by punts. Here and there the darkness was relieved by tableaux, and for economical reasons the tunnel was divided so that the punts passed each tableau twice.

Peter had seated himself in the rear of a punt, which, however, was not allowed to go alone with him into the Mill; for before it started a young couple, confirmed Mill goers, were ushered into the front seat and cast a disappointed glance at him as they sat down. Between him and them lay two vacant benches; in the Mill people travel scattered.

When they were in the inkiness of the tunnel, a soft smacking sound made Peter prick up his ears. The sound, though it embarrassed him, was music itself—so plainly did it tell him that he was forgotten. For he had gone into the Mill with but one wild aim—to hide somewhere until Joe grew tired of waiting.

They reached the first tableau, which represented a dusty ice-field with spangled northern lights behind it. Peter would have leaped from the punt had there been a berg large enough to conceal him, but it was a very miniature ice-field and he left it behind in the dark. The next tableau was a realistic Hades in which a few fiends pranced in a mica fire; but even in hell there was no room for poor Peter. He meditated bitterly. Then they reached a Southern plantation where two life-sized negroes were picking soiled cotton. His heart leaping with a new thought, he clutched the walls. Too late! The punt swept on.

But he had got a thought, a magnificent, breathless thought! When in doubt, act! When in danger—he sat braced for instant action.

The next tableau was a field of wheat in which hung a scarecrow. He sprang from the

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punt right into its midst. Apprehensively clutching the brittle grain, he watched his punt depart. From the darkness that swallowed it came a soft smacking sound.

There was no time to lose; at any moment a punt would pass. Fiercely he tore the scarecrow from its perch, and as he held it in his arms a punt did pass very silently. It was empty. Then, before he had time to catch his breath he heard loud laughter, and from the other side of the partition another punt swung into the light, crowded with people. This then was the end! He could only hug the scarecrow and wait numbly.

They spied him at once with joyous cries of "Hello, papa!" "Isn't the baby cute?" While a booming bass voice sang tenderly, "Go to sleep, ma little pickaninny." They had taken him for a Mill employee repairing the scenery!

Right-O! He would be a Mill employee until another empty punt came along! He stripped the scarecrow feverishly and counted his spoils; a battered felt hat, a dirty, torn coat. A rag-man would not have bought them, but they would do.

AFTER first removing his own good coat and transferring its contents to his trousers pocket, he hastily donned the scarecrow's coat. It was a poor exchange for his own, which he draped upon the straw body with a sigh. Never before had a scarecrow been so respectably dressed.

While he was doing all this a punt passed on the other side of the partition. Peter died several deaths, for even a Mill employee might be suspected of eccentricity if he were caught changing clothes with a scarecrow. Unnecessary worry! It was the punt he had left. As it disappeared into the darkness he heard a soft smacking sound.

His disguise was complete; what artistic details it lacked would be added when that empty punt came along—if it ever did. It was some time now since his own punt had passed. Something seemed to be wrong with the Mill. There was an unwonted quiet in the tunnel; the water no longer lapped against the sides, nor the cable that joined the punts together scrape against the bottom. From the darkness cries arose:—"Hey, what's the idea?" and a girl whimpered, "Oh Gee, I'm scared." The Mill had stopped. He realized later that the attendants outside were getting his description from Sarah Hughes.

It must have been nearly ten minutes before the cable began to scrape again. The frightened voices in the Mill died down. From the distance a booming bass voice sang sentimentally, "Many brave hearts are asleep in the deep, so beware, Be—ware." There was a



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moment's silence; then excited feminine voices eddied up the tunnel. A new punt was approaching at last. With a beating heart Peter clapped the scarecrow's hat on his head and became a Mill employee.

The punt came nearer, grew louder, and finally floated out into the light. As he solicitously dusted the scarecrow, he saw from the corner of his eye that the tunnel was crowded with white, vaguely familiar, fat faces. A dozen mouths opened in a shriek.

"Mr. Marigold!"

"He is crazy!"

"We should have brought a man!"

"Stop the boat!"

A babble of voices, ineffectual, soon lost in the dark. Peter grinned feebly.

However, it was really serious. Those women had seen his disguise. They apparently thought he was insane and who could blame them for it? Had he not heard them say they should have brought a man? Ripples as cold as the water in the Mill ran along his spine. Then there they were, speeding along the tunnel to the exit, screaming for a man to put him in a padded cell. There was only one solution to this; he would have to leave the Mill ahead of them.

Peter was fond of bridge and took a deep pride in his ability to remember the cards that had been played. In this game there had been certain cards, too. He went over them swiftly—all the punts that had passed.

First there was the one he had come in—second, an empty punt—third, the one filled with those confounded women. All these punts would pass again on the other side of the partition. Let him go over what had already passed there:

First—a punt full of strangers. Second—Why, of course! His punt had already gone by!—Could he forget that soft smacking sound?

He leaped to his feet. Then the next would be empty! Empty! Now let those women yell. He would escape them yet.

He ran to the edge of the platform and tried to pierce the partition with his eyes. Would he know when it was coming, or would it glide by unsuspected? What was that? Something bumped against the wall in the dark of the tunnel. Something made a gentle, scraping sound as it came. Something approached with ripples under its bow! Gathering himself together, he waited until he thought it was just opposite, and with one mad leap cleared the partition.

He dropped between the last two benches of the empty punt. Overcome by the narrowness of his margin, he sat down and moped his face.

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IN this way he discovered that in each hand he clutched a hat; his own worn but neat straw and the scarecrow's contribution. He remembered now that he had taken them both from his head as he leaped. No wonder those women had screamed. He must have been a sight standing there with two hats on his head.

He passed the cotton-field and was at Hades. Into those crimson depths Peter sent flying his own hat, not without a pang, for it had been a good hat in its time; and his hat, though unjustly condemned, refused to relinquish the mission with which it had been born into the world, swerved from the mica fire at which he had aimed it, and hung itself with jaunty wickedness on the horns of him who could be no other than Lucifer himself. For the first time that day Peter laughed.

Next he tore off his collar and tie and stuffed them in his pocket. At the ice-field, the first, last, and dirtiest of all the tableaux, he completed his disguise. It needed only a handful of ancient dust, caught up from the platform and smeared over his jaws in passing. As his punt came out into the darkening mid-way, no one would have recognized in the toil-soiled labourer who occupied it the neat—though demented—gentleman who had gone into the Mill.

At the exit stood the attendant, a big policeman, and the indefatigable Sarah Hughes who had not gone into the tunnel with the others. Here was the law Peter had been longing to call all evening, but with the picture of a padded cell in his mind he trembled now lest he be discovered. So he pretended to doze under his hat, but they, having no knowledge of the scarecrow, let him by without a glance.

"He ought to be coming out about now," muttered the attendant, "if he's coming at all."

"Maybe he's hung himself," said the policeman calmly.

From the black mouth of the tunnel was now heard the faint babble of excited feminine voices. Peter hastily turned his collar higher and softly withdrew. With shambling gait he neared the exit, where Joe and Lucile stood in horrible patience on either side. Not even the policeman, not even the turmoil of Peter's madness, could move them from that spot.

Peter scarcely breathed as he approached them. He put a hand in his pocket and felt his heart thump. Now or never! He dared not pause, to hesitate would draw their sharp eyes upon him. With his head drooping just enough to cast the shadow of his hat upon his face he went by, shuffling a little like a tired



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labourer. The precious pair never even looked at him.

AND that's that," he finished cheerfully, after telling his wife the whole story.

"But, Peter—your good clothes! The money!" bewailed Mrs. Marigold. "And all for a box that you threw away."

Peter's shoulders twitched. "What box, my dear?"

"Please, don't be aggravating. The one you threw overboard, of course."

"Oh, *that*!"

With a jerk his hand came from behind his back. "Here is a present for you, Mary."

It was a shallow, cardboard box, which she opened wonderingly.

"You've seen the evening papers, of course," said Peter in a queer voice.

But Mrs. Marigold did not answer. She was staring at her "present" with an expression of frozen amazement.

"Lady Jonson's necklace! Peter!"

With a whoop he caught her in his arms. "Ten thousand dollars reward, my dear! Wasn't that worth going a little crazy for? Ten thousand dollars! Now we can buy that chicken farm we've always wanted!"

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He kissed her violently. "Where's the telephone directory, Mary? I'll 'phone the old lady now."

As he looked up Lady Jonson's number he began to laugh loudly. "Did you know that the latest style in hell is a straw hat worn on one horn? No, dear, honestly, I'm not really crazy. It's the truth I'm telling you."

"But the box, Peter?—You threw it away!"

"Why, that was nothing," he said simply, "I found ten cents in the midway and won a box of chocolates. That's what I threw away. Joe was awfully sick about it!"

UP where the gods sat a scattered clapping greeted the end of the play.

"Not a bad act," drawled Mercury, "Let's come back tomorrow and get Joe and Lucille away before the police come."

"Right-O," yawned the other gods, "Ho hum!"

Soon the theatre was empty except for a flock of cupids, dressed as ushers, who began to put back the seats and look under them for umbrellas and rubbers.

At least, this is how Peter ends it.

Thanksgiving

By Jean Blewett

*We thank Thee, Lord, and not alone
For gold and gladness, full success,
The treasures we have called our own,
The faith, the love, the happiness;
But for the sorrow and the smart,
The striving, and the longing vain,
The song we caroled in our heart
When our poor lips were dumb with pain.*

*Not for accomplishment complete,
Not for the carefree, guarded way,
Not for the pleasant paths our feet
Did seek and find one golden day;
But for the highway's dust and din,
For perilous places safely passed,
For every briar of doubt and sin
That caught, but dare not hold us fast.*

*For all thy patience through the years,
The years that come, the years that go,
Thy patience with our faults and fears,
Dear Lord we thank Thee, kneeling low.*



Walnuts

By BEATRICE REDPATH

We consider this one of the very best stories by this popular Canadian writer. A psychological story with a denouement that will leave you gasping.



WOMEN seem to like him, but I don't know what you will think of him." Adine Turner's tone betrayed the fact that her ideas did not entirely coincide with those of her own sex.

"Why does he interest you?" Lingard inquired, smiling across the rays of firelight. Is it just curiosity?"

"No, not altogether. You remember Hetty Ames? Or probably you don't. She must have been just a child when you were home the last time. Well she's grown up now. I'm not going to describe her. Hetty Ames is indescribable. Besides—old Ames left her all his money. It makes a very pleasant background for her. The child seems to have lost her head completely over this Stoddard. I feel responsible in a sort of way. She met him here."

"And you think that he's—?"

"No," said Adine Turner, "I don't think that he's a fortune hunter, if that's what you mean. He appears to have plenty of money of his own. Flings it about in quite an absurd fashion. I call it bad taste. No—I think he wants to marry Hetty Ames for herself. It's not very surprising. Wait till you see her. She's utterly unspoiled in spite of everything. I've no reason on earth to interfere. I wish I had. But I know nothing about the man. Only I don't like him. There's something—I don't know what. Call it a strain of cruelty beneath the veneer. He's ridiculously popular. If it weren't for Hetty Ames—it wouldn't matter. But she's too fine for his sort. I asked you here to-night to meet him—to hear your opinion."

Lingard laughed.

"But my dear Adine," he remonstrated, "you know that people are a closed book to me. I can't turn them inside out, as you do. I can't judge. Why ask me for my opinion? Your own is infinitely more valuable."

Adine Turner rose to push a vase of flowers away from the heat of the fire that was making the petals limp. She stood with one arm extended along the low mantelpiece, looking at Lingard, a puzzled expression in her eyes.

"I don't know his type," she said, "it's one I've never come in contact with before."

You've probably met dozens of men just like him. He's a man who has seen a great deal of life—something of the seamy side too, in spite of his money. I wish I knew . . . just what his past has been."

THERE was no time for further conversation for Hetty Ames flashed into the room. Adine Turner had not exaggerated her charm. Lingard could scarcely wonder that the man closely following her had been caught by it and held. But towards Stoddard he felt an immediate distaste. There was too much suavity, too much flattery in his tone, as he held Adine's hand in greeting just an instant too long.

"You should have plenty to say to one another," Adine Turner said, after her introduction of the two men, "both of you have travelled so much."

Stoddard swept Lingard with an indifferent glance, and then turned away, ignoring him in his conversation that was threaded with names. To Lingard they meant nothing, since he had been so long away from his own country. It was easy to see that Hetty Ames was fascinated by the man. He treated her, Lingard thought, in the few moments while they waited for dinner to be announced, as though she were his for the asking.

It seemed a pity, he thought, as he listened to her clear voice, brimming with enthusiasm, that she should take for her mate a man like Stoddard. But as Adine Turner had said, there was nothing against the man, barring his personality, which for some apparently had charm. Tall, thin, and dark, he was striking-looking in appearance. Of the Latin temperament, Lingard judged, smooth on the surface, cruel beneath. He had always detested men of the sort that Stoddard represented. His own friends were more robust, more purely masculine, more openly honest and simple of heart.

Adine Turner gave Lingard a questioning glance as they passed from the room with its scarlet cushions and bowls of scarlet Chinese pottery, filled with masses of hydrangeas, through the tiny hall with its Japanese prints, to the sombre gloom of the dining room. Lingard only returned her glance of inquiry with a smile. He had no reason on earth to ex-



press even by a glance, his objection to Stoddard. They were purely personal. He could not decry the man because of them.

The conversation skimmed the surface of things, and Lingard listened, saying little himself. Hetty Ames sat watching Stoddard, with young honest eyes that had not as yet learned to conceal the emotions of her heart and brain. Stoddard was too worldly for her, Lingard meditated, too clever, too innately selfish. She would not be able to hold him once the full fragrance of her beauty had diminished, once the glitter of her wealth had become a pleasant habit that he had adopted. For in spite of what Stoddard had himself, a fortune like the fortune old Ames must have left, was not to be disregarded.

There seemed nothing that could come in the way of it; no reason on earth why she should not marry him, if she cared for him. And it was quite apparent that she did; in a young impetuous fashion. People might even consider her fortunate, for apparently from what Lingard gathered from his conversation, he had made for himself a host of friends, with the lavish way in which he spent money, and his social capabilities. Such friends, Lingard ruminated, as demanded only a good partner at bridge, an affable manner, and a large bank account.

THE dessert was on the table, low dishes of golden peaches, crimson plums and hot-house grapes, before Lingard was roused from a casual interest in what was going on around him. Stoddard had taken a walnut from the dish in front of him and was cracking it between his first finger and thumb.

Lingard leaned forward, watching the curious trick for a moment, and then he half closed his eyes while a picture flashed across his mind.

A restaurant in Valparaiso; a red tiled floor; small marble-topped tables; outside the steady white glare of the tropics; the patio with its great coarse-fronded plants; stringed instruments; the chatter of Spanish; a woman in a vivid yellow garment; a bowl of English walnuts on the table; the story the woman told of a man who could crack a walnut between his first finger and thumb.

Lingard fixed his eyes intently on Stoddard's face.

"I've only heard of one other man who could do that," he said.

Stoddard glanced at Lingard, disinterested, bored by this break in the conversation. It was Adine who, looking inquiringly at Lingard replied:

"You mean the way he cracks a walnut? I noticed it too. Isn't it curious?" Then, turning to Stoddard with a smile, "I was just go-

ing to ask how you did it. It seems to me that it would require the strength of a Hercules."

"It's really very simple," Stoddard answered with indifference. "I learned to do it years ago, and now I suppose I do it unconsciously."

"Who was the other man who could do it?" Adine Turner inquired, looking across the table at Lingard who was watching Stoddard very intently. "Where did you know him?"

"I didn't know him," Lingard replied slowly, "a woman told me about a man she knew who could do it. There was quite a story attached to it. Perhaps that was why it stuck in my mind. It's queer how one remembers . . . sometimes."

"Do tell us about it," pleaded Adine Turner, "it sounds interesting. Who was the woman?"

"It's not a very pretty tale, not exactly the sort to tell at a dinner. I don't know if you would find it interesting. I don't know," he went on very slowly, "if there's much point in telling it."

"You've roused our curiosity," Adine Turner said, "please tell it."

"Do," Hetty Ames said eagerly, "we want to hear it."

Lingard was looking at Stoddard and did not reply at once. Adine had been right when she had said that there was a cruel streak in the man. What a hideous awakening Hetty Ames would have some day. Could his sudden fancy be in any way possible. It would be almost too much of a coincidence. But yet . . . why not?

"I'm sure your story would be remarkably interesting," Stoddard said, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice.

Lingard gave him a sharp glance, and then began abruptly, speaking directly to Adine.

SHE wasn't the type of woman you have ever come across. I met her in a restaurant in South America. It was rather a poor sort of place. Too gay . . . too much wine . . . too many pretty women. There was a brute of a man who was making himself obnoxious to this particular woman. I watched them for a time, and then I saw that he was going altogether too far. I got rid of him for her, and then quite naturally I sat down with her to have a glass of wine."

"She wasn't pretty . . . then. But there were traces of it. She was faded and bitter and disillusioned. Life had beaten her all round. I don't say that it wasn't largely her own fault. For it was. But it seemed to me that I held the man more to blame."

"There happened to be a bowl of walnuts on the table. She picked up a nut and looked at it. I can remember still the curious expression in her eyes as she sat looking at it in



her hand. Half mocking, half bitter, half sad, and then careless, with that awful indifferent carelessness that comes after despair has taken hold. She looked up at me with a twist to her reddened lips and said: 'Walnuts! There was a man I once knew who could crack a walnut between his finger and thumb.' And then she told me the whole story."

Lingard paused, and glanced around the table. Adine Turner was listening intently, a slight wondering expression in her fine eyes, a curious intentness in her attitude. Stoddard was sitting back, his face in shadow. His eyes were strangely narrowed and there was an unpleasant expression about his mouth Lingard fancied, and wondered if it was only fancy. Hetty Ames was leaning forward, her slender ringless hands clasped on the table, her brown eyes eager with interest.

Lingard hesitated for a fraction of a moment as to whether he would go on with the story. His glance swept Stoddard's face again. But there was nothing to be learned from it. He was waiting, merely bored, for Lingard to continue, to have done with this story and allow him to resume more pleasant topics. That was all that was to be learned from his expression.

"She had married a man who was a good deal older than herself," he went on slowly, "and very soon she grew tired of him. She had been poor, and I imagine that she had married him, thinking that she would have all the gaiety, all the luxury and amusement for which she had been starved. But, instead, she found that she was bound to a man who had no taste for amusement. His life was given over to work. He couldn't alter his nature to please her. I don't know that he made the effort. What she said, was that she was disappointed with life . . . unhappy. It seemed empty and purposeless. She was restless and dissatisfied, vaguely looking for some thing with which to fill the void."

"It was about this time that her husband made a trip to South America on business, and took her with him. She was entranced with the prospect that the change offered, of variety and excitement. But after she had been there for a time she found that everything was much the same as it had been. Her husband was away all day and she was left alone. She had no friends; she was thrown entirely upon her own resources. And I imagine that she had none. She did not strike me as being a woman with very much intelligence. She was merely feminine and might have been rather sweet. Married to the right man I daresay her life would have been domesticated . . . after the first hunger for gaiety had died down. Living in hotels in a foreign country her life was

idle and without purpose. She was in a state to be the sport of any whim . . . and it was at this time that she met this man . . . the man who could break walnuts between his finger and thumb. She never told me his name."

"He had been connected with her husband in a business way. I don't remember the details. My memory does not serve me there . . . or perhaps she did not go into it very lucidly. She was more concerned of course over the human side. To her, the rest seemed superfluous. Her husband was immensely wealthy and there came a time when this stranger in her life appeared to become very fond of her. She accepted his attentions at first, merely amused and gratified. Her vanity was soothed. But at length to her surprise she found that it had gone deeper than she had ever intended that it should. So much so in fact, that when his proposal finally came, that she should act as a cat's paw in a scheme to rob her husband, she readily consented. When this plan was accomplished, it was understood between them, that they should go away together and live on the spoils.

"Poor little fool! But she could scarcely know, I suppose, with her small grasp of things, that a man who suggested such a scheme was scarcely one in whom to put any trust. The man seemed to hypnotise her . . . she was completely in his power. She said that he had great personal charm . . . and he was near her own age. They had everything in common . . . and she was terribly lonely for companionship. Well, . . . the scheme worked out as they had planned that it should. The man had brains apparently, and knew how to use them to further his own ends. Her husband lost a vast sum of money. He did not lose everything for he was enormously rich; but he lost enough to make him mad and just a little suspicious of the part which she had played in the affair. She had probed for information very cunningly, and he remembered having given her certain facts which had been used. Her husband knew of course just how the whole affair had been managed—but it was within the law of the country. He could do nothing except to make things slightly unpleasant for our friend.

"Well, she went to him just as it had all been arranged. And he laughed at her. He told her that when he married he wanted a wife who had some sense of honor. Yes—actually, he went so far as to say that. You can scarcely credit it can you? He said that he wanted a girl who was fine and sweet and young. He didn't want her sort. He was through with her now that she had served his purpose. He was quite frank and honest with her—brutally so. She pleaded with him, im-



plored him to take her out of the country, to let her stay if only for a while, but he wouldn't listen. He scoffed at the very idea of such a thing. He said he was tired of her. It ended by his taking her by the shoulders and turning her out of his house.

"She took the only road that was open to her and went back to her husband. But in the meantime he had discovered just the part she had played in the affair. I can't be sure of any of the details . . . it was rather blurred the way she told it. Her husband told her to go back to the man whose tool she had been. He said he wanted nothing more to do with her.

"She hadn't a penny of her own. She had nowhere to go. She had no friends in the country. God knows how she even managed to exist. She got work of some sort and was discharged for incompetency. She fell lower, she struggled, and then finally . . . she gave up. She hadn't much stamina. There wasn't much character there with which to face hardships. She couldn't put up a fight against life. She simply let herself be washed down with the tide. Flung like driftwood . . ."

Lingard paused again and looked up from the spoon with which he had been playing, looked across the table at Stoddard and spoke slowly, his eyes on Stoddard's face.

"The husband died shortly afterwards and left the remnants of his fortune to charity. The other . . . she said that she never knew what had become of him. She thought that he had probably gone to some other country and prospered. He was clever about money. He had undoubtedly managed well. She never heard of him again. I don't know that she wanted to hear of him. She had had plenty of time to get a perspective,—to reverse her former

opinions. And for all that she was, at the time I met her I imagine that she had more personality and insight into character than when she had known him. She had come to despise him as much as she had come to despise herself."

THERE was silence around the table after Lingard had come to the end of his tale. He looked around him, from Adine's grave eyes, to Hetty Ames, whose face had a startled, almost a frightened expression. Stoddard was the first to break the silence. He broke it with a short mirthless laugh.

"That is very interesting I am sure. A fine attempt to work up one's emotional feelings. I'm not sure that mine can be worked up in quite that fashion. It's a little crude isn't it? Scarcely a tale to tell at a dinner table as I think you said yourself. I'm afraid that I don't quite see the point of it all. It doesn't appear to hit any mark."

Adine Turner turned from Lingard to look at Stoddard with a slow thoughtful gaze. There was understanding in her eyes, and the understanding heightened as her glance rested for the fraction of a second on the hand with which Stoddard was lifting a wine glass; a hand that clenched until the wine spilled over on the white linen mat.

Hetty Ames was looking from one to another, bewilderment on her face, bewilderment through which a startled horror was preparing to break.

"I scarcely thought it would interest you," Lingard said slowly, his eyes upon the spreading stain. "It was only a bit of melodrama which I thought might interest—Miss Ames."

"HIS BLACK CLUB BAG"

is the title of a remarkable story by Madge Macbeth. It will appear in an early number. Don't miss it.



Grey Mother

By LLOYD ROBERTS

*Here is a story of an absolutely new kind—
a strong story that glows with the color and
romance of the Canadian woods.*



WHEN John Boyce realized that his camp was becoming as overrun with vermin as was the town of Hamelin, he decided to fetch in the home cat. This he did in spite of hot words and hot tears from his wife and son respectively. To the man Grey Mother was little more than his can of Paris green, but to Maisie and Bobby she was companion and play-mate, one of the family, indeed, and to send her into the exile of the camps was a gross betrayal of affection. Now, various other loggers had also decided to sacrifice, not their wife's relatives, but domestic pets, upon the altar of the cause, with the result that seven feline visitors, including Old Tom, a veteran of countless battles, appeared on the scene in the same week.

No matter, there was plenty for all, not only in the way of sport, but also in the way of table refuse, and their rough, warm-hearted hosts made them feel entirely at home.

By spring and quitting time, the cats, as cats will, had increased their colony by the addition of several litters. The lumbermen knew well enough that litters would not be tolerated at home, and, as the mothers were still a necessity to their off-spring, the men shrugged their shoulders and turned their backs upon them all.

Not Boyce, however. Remembering that he had given Bobby solemn promise to return Grey Mother to him in the spring "just as good as new," he meant to keep his promise in spite of her having been taken with the prevalent malady. But when the day of departure had arrived there was no Maltese to be found. With maternal acuteness she had noted and correctly interpreted the unwonted confusion and had hidden herself in the bosom of her secreted family until the last team and teamster had humped away down the trail. Then the cats stepped in and took possession.

TWO winters had passed since then. The first had been comparatively mild, with only a week or two of twenty-below weather and a moderate fall of snow. Small game had been plentiful, especially rabbits and wood-mice, and although the procuring of meat meant indefatigable stalking on the part of the seventeen cats, thirteen appeared to sun them-

selves on the roofs when May had come, and the absentees were due to such enemies as lynx and wolf rather than weather.

During the succeeding spring and summer the colonists had added marvelously to their number and to their food demand. The immediate forest had soon become denuded of small game, furred and feathered, compelling deeper inroads into new territory. Not a squirrel nor chipmunk could be induced to approach within half a mile of the dreadful clearing; even the fierce mink and stoat shunned the neighborhood, and among the smaller animals the porcupine alone remained supremely indifferent to the presence of the aliens in their midst.

And so, when the second winter descended upon Lonely Camp affairs very soon became desperate. The young and the maimed were the first to go; gaps appeared in the ranks of the strongest. Snow came early and drifted deep; the cold was intense. For days the cats were besieged in the cabins waiting for the gales to abate or the still, grey billows to form a crust that would bear their weight. Then they would steal out, desperate with hunger, to fling themselves upon anything they should chance to meet. Knowing nothing of pack law, each was solely intent on his own hunting, and in many a swift and bloody battle gave his own life for the prolongation of his enemy's.

Twice the wolves made sudden forays upon the clearing, heading off stray cats from tree and building; picking them off the top rail of the fence; even following them into the cabins, up caulk-pitted stairs to lofts and bins and over straw-heaped bunks. Luckily there were many convenient rafters and ledges, and the casualties were vastly disproportionate to the excitement. Thus, in one way or another, tragedy haunted Lonely Camp persistently, until by spring there were only twenty-three survivors, including Grey Mother and Old Tom, and these bore signs of the terrible struggle they had been through.

However, even this experience failed to dampen the ardor of the remnant. The will to live and the will to propagate are inseparable—indeed are phases of the same instinct. So again appeared the inevitable downy bundles of blind and complaining innocents with



appetites out of all proportion to their bellies. The census doubled over-night and the torn and scraggy mothers needs must forage swifter and farther than ever, although luckily into a bountiful spring teeming with fresh abundance. Skunks sometimes took advantage of an owner's absence to lighten her day's work, and so did certain of the relatives. Throughout the summer months life was well in the ascendant however and the feline colony waxed fat, and kicked.

II.

The dozing cats raised their heads, listening intently. Their ragged ears had caught the sound of footsteps—clumsy, hurried movements that only a human makes. Grey Mother and Old Tom recognized the sound with who knows what stirring of half-forgotten memories and emotions, but to the rest it was strange and therefore ominous, and the hair on their backs and tails rose defiantly. Nearly two-score pair of baleful eyes stared fixedly toward the northern side of the clearing.

A child stepped into the autumn sunlight and stood staring about him. His faded jersey pinked against the olive-green background like a patch of firewood. His uncapped hair was brown and matted and upended like storm-tossed thatch. His round grimy cheeks were striated with tear rivulets. Presently he lifted his hands appealingly toward the cabins and stumbled forward. A frightened tortoise on a nearby log snarled and spat venomously as he passed. The door of the nearest building hung by one hinge. He pushed it open and standing on the sill wailed hoarsely, "Daddy! Daddy!" Then realizing that he was at the stables, he turned and ran toward the main cabin. Here the winds had toppled the door onto the floor. He stopped a yard within the entrance to again shout for daddy. There was no response, except that presently his voice came whispering back at him from some far-off hill. The awful silence struck him dumb. He cringed back, mouth open, staring through puffy lids into the shadowy interior. As he began to comprehend the desertion, the cobwebs and the dust his eyes became focused on a long bench against the opposite wall, where an angular black cat with a bent and bony tail glared rigid with hate. Clutching hungrily at even this straw of comfort he tottered forward, gasping "Pussy, Pussy!" Pussy's razor-like back bent into an inverted V, the bony tail jerked violently like a pump handle and, just as the boy's hands were about to fall upon it, it shot up to a projection of rusty stovepipe, whence it broke into a tirade of threats and curses. The child's thin shoulders shook with slow sobs. He fell hopelessly onto the near-

est bunk, his legs dangling to the floor, his face buried in the chaff.

Presently he became aware that something was brushing gently but persistently against his calves. Then something sharp pricked his thigh. He raised his head. The face of a big cat was thrust close to his own. Its cheekbones ridged its taut hide; its lips were parted in a perpetual grin; one ear was in shreds while the other stood up in bony prominence. But the boy recognized it at a glance.

"Dear little Grey Mother!" he cried, and scooping it into the bunk wrapped both arms about it, soaking its fur with tears.

The Maltese replied with low throaty whines and much licking of the lad's fingers and cheeks. Fear had lifted and presently he was asleep.

The cat extricated itself from the encircling arms and was gone. The sun slid nearer and nearer to the western side of the clearing, pushing the jagged spruce shadows farther into the open, until they rested heavily across the cabins. The silence was intense. At last the ruddy light found a gaping rent in the dam and bursting through flooded the innermost recesses of the bunk-house. It warmed a handleless dipper beneath the bench, turned a rusted tobacco tin to burnished copper, caressed the extravagant beauty of a colored print upon the wall, and filled the space between the door and window with a revolving pillar of golden dust-motes. Finally it found the earthed hair of the sleeping child and turned it too to copper. Thereupon he awoke.

He clambered down and searched for food. All his eager hands could find were a few matches, bits of candle, broken crockery and a general assortment of rubbish. For three days now he had gone without anything more substantial than pigeon-berries and hazel-nuts, and his short legs wobbled unsteadily. He sank upon the bench, staring blankly into the painted twilight. He was too weary to cry. A cat began yowling dismally back of the clearing, and he thought of Grey Mother.

"Pussy, pussy, pussy," he began whispering to himself. Pussy appeared in the doorway, her scrawny tail writhing, her eyes distended warily. She came straight to the lad and dropped something at his feet. It was a chipmunk. Bobby understood. He had often seen his father hand chipmunks to his mother for stew. With trembling eagerness he picked up the little limp body, pulled out his broken-bladed jack-knife, and essayed to skin and clean the carcass. It was a messy job. Not a hundred feet from the cabin a spring bubbled up in a sunken barrel. He reached for the dipper and hastened for water, followed closely by the cat. Then he threw refuse



and chips into the square, sheet-iron stove and applied a match. The flame roared angrily, spewing sparks and smoke through countless apertures and the open pipe-hole. The upper half of the cabin was blotted out with smoke.

Presently the water in the dipper began to boil. The lad dropped in the meat. Minutes dragged like hours as he watched. Suddenly he could wait no more. With a couple of sticks he removed the tin and forked out the meat. Never had anything tasted quite so good. It was even better than his mother's buckwheat cakes and maple syrup. Indeed, only the head and tail came to Grey Mother.

The sun was now down and the cabin full of shadow. Old Tom stuck his grizzled head in the doorway, stared an instant at the visitor and slunk in. He was followed by other cats—yellow and white and barred and patched—furtive, vindictive, primordial cats, snarling with fear and hate and giving the child a wide berth. Only Grey Mother kept close, watching the door. Bobby dropped the last bone and stretched. An owl wailed softly from far away. His heart quickened its beat. He became aware of the gloom and rising tiptoed to the entrance. A dull rusty-red still persisted over the blotted forest.

How black and mysterious the forest looked! The Maltese whimpered and he jumped. The fear that had been his for three terrible nights was getting him again. He caught at the fallen door, and with desperate energy reared it into place. Only after he had braced it with a dozen poles and boards did he feel secure. Then he crawled into the furthest corner of the upper tier of bunks, drew a great heap of straw and fir needles about him, and straightway fell asleep.

THAT night the wolf-pack chanced to pay another visit to Lonely Camp. It swept into the clearing swift and noiseless as a cloud-shadow. Not until it was stopped by an unexpected barrier did it give voice to its emotions. Then it dropped on its haunches and howled at the star-pierced sky. The terrible whip-like noise cut into the lad's dream. He sat up, clammy with horror. The cats were rasping and spitting all about him in the dark. A tail brushed his face. He gathered Grey Mother into his arms. The noise stopped as abruptly as it had begun. There was sniffing, scratching, a whine or two—then utter silence. Even the cats were still. The whole world seemed a pair of black ears, listening, listening. The boy cowered with tense muscles, until merciful sleep took him gently in her arms and laid him back upon the straw.

III.

Five bitter days passed, and no one came

to Lonely Camp. The temperature dropped a few degrees, putting a skin of ice on the dipper at night and edging the winds until they hurt. To the lad's fearful thought winter was close upon him. He dared no stay; he dared not leave. He stood day long in the doorway watching the mouth of the trail for the slouching figure of his father, while Grey Mother crouched beside him or else went about her hunting. In spite of her hunting he was hungry, cruelly hungry. He thought hours on end of his mother's ginger-bread and sugar cookies and blueberry pie. Boiled meat sickened him. The matches were nearly gone. Must he, then, eat it raw? Why did not Daddy come? Perhaps they were angry because he ran away? Perhaps they had quite forgotten him? Perhaps they did not know which way he went and were looking all over the world for him, and Daddy was sad and Mummy was crying? He did not want Mummy to cry. He would never run away again. In spite of the terrible forest he would go to her. He would follow the trail and Grey Mother would go too. Yes, he would go now. There was a big glass of buttermilk and maybe warm gingerbread waiting for him. He went in and put the matches in his pocket. "Pussy, pussy!" he called, and struck manfully out, and pussy, with a low trill, trotted after. Not until he had gained the edge of the wood did he glance back. Grey Mother was at his heels, a hundred yards behind slunk the disreputable Tom, and behind him again trailed the vanguard of a great company of cats who had refused to be deserted by their leaders. Here was companionship indeed! He trudged on with greater courage. They would all come home with him of course, and occupy the abandoned stables back of the woodshed. How pleased Mummy would be, and what glorious batches of kittens would result!

The trail opened before him like an endless black-green tunnel. The low sun could only reach its floor in spots and splashes, and the fallen leaves were dank with frost. The lad stuck his hands into his little pockets and shivered. He glanced apprehensively from side to side, but seldom behind. His ragged army was behind, guarding his rear. Some held to the open trail, while others foraged continuously among the underbrush, cutting a wide swath in the small life of the wilderness as they moved. Hunting was far more profitable once they had left the clearing behind. Grey Mother laid two chipmunks at the boy's feet with scarcely an interruption in the journey, so that when weakness forced him to pause he had something with which to renew his strength. He endeavored to start a fire with damp twigs and wasted three or four matches before he



succeeded. Then he found that he had but one match left. No matter. He would surely be snug at home before night-fall. He gave one chipmunk to Grey Mother and skinned and spitted the other on a stick. As he roasted it Old Tom and his savage offspring hunted and wrangled about him.

But there was no rest for Bobby. As he sat on a hummock, tearing greedily at the half-cooked meat, his mind was clouded with dread. Suppose the night should catch him? He imagined it even now searching for him through the swamps and thickets. He must not delay another instant. Unconscious of his fatigue, he rose and started on, the remains of the chipmunk still clutched in his greasy fingers. The Maltese followed and, as news of his action permeated the forest, so did the whole army of stragglers. Now the old logging-road climbed upward, crossing a ridge of beeches and maples. They billowed above him in clouds of amber and scarlet until the clear autumnal air swam with color. Their heaped treasures tinkled musically about his knees. An alien hemlock smutched the blazing canvas with sepia. The jagged slit of sky in the high foliage was the intense blue of lapis lazuli. Not a bird-note broke the stillness, not a leaf stirred — just color — color. Bobby's faded red sweater made an ugly spot of brown; his tiny unkempt figure made pathetic contrast with such lavishness of pomp and glory. Surely man was the least of all Nature's children. He trudged slowly by, like some squalid piper minus his pipe and his apparel, followed reluctantly by a furtive and unlovely host.

For a time there were open glades where the sun crashed through, hinting of man's work. But the lad's hope fell again as the trail dipped toward evergreens and the color died out behind him. Instead of fallen leaves his feet trod on woodbine and ground-pine, moss and dried spruce cones, and the stench of muck and rotting lily-pads was in the air. It was growing ominously dark here in the valley. Increasing his pace seemed to have no effect. The shadows continued to rise about him like an incoming tide. Grey Mother trotted awkwardly in order to keep up. He heard a curious rubbing sound behind him and stopped abruptly. Through the gloom of the trail's bend, a hundred yards back, ran Old Tom and a fungus-orange tabby. They also stopped abruptly and fell to licking at their scrawny ribs. But the boy went on relieved. A whip-poor-will whistled with lonely insistence. Then a stag bounded frantically across the trail, bringing a sharp sob into the boy's throat. Now his ears caught the purr and titter of running water. Running water was

a friendly thing. The trail dipped and dipped again, something gleamed softly through the dusk, and he was beside a broad, shallow stream. Night being inevitable, he would stop here. He set about gathering all the loose limbs, slabs of bark, stump refuse and inflammable debris he could find, and piled it close to the water's edge. When his courage could no longer withstand the thickening shadows he touched his last match to a roll of birch bark and drove them back among the cedars. Then he lay down in a mossy hollow between the fire and the stream, and prepared to feed the flames throughout the night. But the water talked to him in a kindly, natural way, reassuring him greatly, and Grey Mother was purring contentedly in his arms, and the heat of the fire was so soft and cuddling and — and—. So he slipped gently off into a dreamless land where not even an echo of grim reality strayed, and left the sparks to finish their dancing and crawl into their holes, the ragged army to bunk for themselves among the branches, and the inscrutable night to crawl in closer and closer to this small atom of humanity and the grey cat.

SUDDENLY the boy sat up, his ears torn with noise. A bedlam of hisses raged about him in the dark. He blew frantically at a pocket of live coals. A spark or two scattered, touched a fragment of punk and leapt into tiny flame. From the corner of his eye he caught a shadow sliding away. With both hands he showered leaves and twigs upon the coals. Flames ran out and stabbed sharply at the crushing darkness. Now he saw Grey Mother standing on guard, her tail like a moth-eaten boa, her arched back thorny with up-ended fur. She spat toward the forest with demoniac venom. He threw on more fuel, and suddenly, from the impenetrable caverns of the cedars, there burst that unearthly, whip-like crescendo of a wolf-pack cheated of its prey.

Although the noise stopped almost instantly, and the Maltese fell to smoothing out her coat, the lad continued to feed the fire with lavish hand until the last stick was gone. Then, looking fearfully over his shoulder, he saw a patch of watery grey outlining the saw-edged firs and knew that the terrible night was over. He stuck both fists into his smoke and tear-blurred eyes and shuddered. By the time the fire had burnt itself down the sky-patches were a deep salmon and the water was dappling the eddies with pink foam-patches. It was numbing cold. He started off awkwardly, as though his legs were stilts, and his followers fell in far in the rear.

In half a mile the trail jumped the stream. The lad waded out, heard a plaintive mew, and



THE QUILL

turned to see Grey Mother waiting at the water's lip. As he took her in his arms he remembered the others. They would not permit of such liberties, that was certain, and yet he would not abandon them to the wolves and winter. So he started down the shore, looking for stepping stones, and, as luck would have it, found the river almost blocked with boulders just around the bend. Here he waded over, and struck back to regain the trail. Presently Old Tom leapt on the first rock, and stood there, jerking his tail nervously. Then he sprang across a yard of twisted current onto the next stone, and from there went on without hesitation until he gained the far shore. After him came a coal black animal, snarling with abhorrence, and then a tiger, a tortoiseshell, a dirty grey-white, and so on, until every protruding boulder seemed to pedestal a cat. Two or three half-grown kittens were brushed into the water, to be swept, mewling piteously, through the riffle into quiet pools below. But the lad was far ahead, forging doggedly forward, and thinking only of his mother and a plate of warm gingerbread.

He had not eaten since the afternoon before. His limbs no longer bothered him, nor his stomach either. His head seemed to be floating in a curious way, as though detached from his body. He was not a bit tired now. He could go on indefinitely. Nothing really mattered—except that gingerbread. Thus when the trail again crossed the river he mechanically plucked up Grey Mother, but thought not all of her kith and kin, who congregated irresolutely among the shore alders to wait on fate. A pair of Canada jays followed him a piece with strident raillery. Partridges drummed hollowly about him. A big buck rabbit sat up beside the trail unnoticed. Nothing mattered, not even the evening shadows. They reached out grotesque fingers; they herded in hollows and thickets to watch him go by. The road snaked on interminably.

Now the sun had its eye to a single aperture in the forest. Now it was gone. The grey, impalpable dust of night drifted over the wilderness. The boy finally paused and tried to rub the darkness from his eyes. Grey Mother mewed anxiously. Although certain peculiar visions fled the darkness remained. But there stretched a wide clearing on his right. He noticed it for the first time, and what is more noticed that beyond the broken fangs of stumps and tangle of wild grape-vine sagged the ruins of a lumber-camp. Instinctively he turned towards it. Half the roof had caved in; doors and sashes were long gone; moss and spider-webs and fireweed cluttered the knock-kneed entrance. But it still

GREY MOTHER

breathed of man and his omnipotence, and the lad pushed in and dropped inertly upon a pile of debris. For the space of a minute the grey cat stood tense and silent beside him, questioning every hole and corner with her huge, glassy eyes. Then she sat down, licked futilely at her matted fur and stared again. A frosty rind of moon stood in the crooked doorway. An owl barked sharply. The night cold had begun to flatten its clammy belly against the earth, squeezing wisps of mist from every swamp and bog. The boy slept.

IV.

John Boyce had been tramping the wilderness for more than a week like a man demented. Many of the settlers had given up the search for the Boyce kid and gone home. "Drowned, more'n likely," said public opinion. But the father would search until the snows flew and after.

However he must eat and sleep now and then. His grub had given out and he was turning homeward for more. His tall, stoop-shouldered figure swung swiftly down the trail. His face, haggard behind the bristles, stared straight ahead into the gathering darkness. While his eyes searched forward his visions were of the past. He saw Bobby running to leap into his arms; Bobby asleep in his trundle-bed; Bobby bewailing the departure of the cat, and Bobby in a thousand other poses and places.

Sometimes these visions stabbed sharply at his throat or weakened his knees until they trembled under him. Sometimes his lips mumbled awkwardly over prayers; but more often he cursed as only a lumber-jack can—slowly, monotonously, without malice—an incoherent mutter of backwood's oaths and obscenities. Far below, on his right, the valley plugged with mist; while across Smith's clearing, on his right, a young moon was pitching into the spruces. He saw neither mist nor moon as he ploughed forward—only his visions.

Something struck sharply at his ear. He waited and presently it came again. Only the squeak of a bear cub! With a curse he went on. But the noise continued, drawing closer. Something presently brushed his hand. He started and peered closely. A cat! He snatched it up.

"By heaven, it's Grey Mother!" he growled, his shoulders beginning to shake. "You've come home at last. But where's Bobby? Have you seen Bobby?"

He strode on, and the cat began to struggle. He paid no heed until it scratched him. Then he dropped it and saw it trot back along the trail, mewling eagerly.



"Got kittens hid somewhere," he muttered.
"T'ell with it!"

But he could not dismiss the incident so easily. He saw Bobby's tear-stained face that morning in the stable yard, and heard his own consoling promise: "She'll be returned to yer, sonny, good as new." He had broken his promise, and had been stared at with round accusing eyes when he had sought to excuse himself. Those eyes were accusing him now. He groaned and followed heavily, his sorrow keened to a desperate pitch by this strange meeting.

In a few minutes he was back to the clearing. The cat jumped widely to a fallen trunk and disappeared among the tangle of mullens.

It reappeared, moving as nimbly as a squirrel towards the deserted camp. He stumbled and cursed his way to the entrance.

"Pussy, pussy!" he called stupidly.

He struck a match, throwing the light from his cupped hands. The frail light wavered a moment along the rotted logs and went out.

"Hang the cat!" and he stepped aside to light another match.

A heavy object rustled the dirt to his left. He thought of bears, and stroked the match hurriedly across the seat of his pants. As the flame sprang up a choking wail burst from the shadows:

"Daddy, daddy, daddy! I want to go home!"

A Down Day

Margaret Bossance Boreham

*It's always a down day when manuscripts come back,
With a little slip inside them, but no hint of what they lack;
The little slip politely says, "Not just what we require."
'Twould leave you cold in mid July before a blazing fire.*

*One magazine thus puts it, "Remember," they impress,
"Sophisticated persons are those whom we address,
So please avoid the eloquent, the maudlin and the trite."
In other words, our greatness keep before you as you write.*

*Another one is briefer, "We regret," O cataclysm!
"That lack of time prevents us giving detailed criticism,
And that we are unable to make use of enclosed verses;
We thank you for remembering us, The Editor, name Curtis."*

*A down day! A down day! Ah many days are such!
But still we keep on sending, hoping one day we shall touch
The odd, mysterious something that Editors "require",
That weird and subtle something their jaded hearts desire.*



Heritage

By STANLEY E. GLADWELL

A charity worker, called in to administer relief to a woman and children starving in a city tenement, finds the children playing with a pile of twenty-dollar gold pieces.



DONG! Dong! —two o'clock and a cold, dark night. The cheerless room still vibrated with the sonorous notes when Bertha Crimps stirred uneasily and awoke.

She had been asleep for some hours but her covering of old coats and skirts had fallen to the floor and the chilly discomfort of their waywardness had just penetrated to her subconscious senses.

She noted with a start that there was a light in the room. To her left, and some distance off, for the room was large, an old woman sat at the table, head and shoulders in clear silhouette against the flame of a candle beyond. The head shook as with palsy, the hands, fumbling with some object on the table, were now visible to the right, now to the left, of the hunched back.

"Thirty one—clink—thirty two—clink—three—"

The muttering sounded loud in the silence.

Bertha stretched out her hand to recover the clothing from the floor wondering dreamily what such an apparition could mean. Under her movement the bed creaked noisily. The light was immediately extinguished and the vision vanished into darkness.

Bertha turned over and slept—while soon, dawn came creeping pale and grey over the ugly tenement district. Milk wagons began to rumble noisily through the city streets and prowling cats chanted their last farewells before turning home to breakfast from the garbage cans. Street cars jangled along at a speed never even dreamed of by the most sanguine of after-six-o'clock travellers.

But Angel Court slept on indifferent to another day of wondrous possibility; snored loudly in protest against the too rapidly approaching hours of toil, and turned over to dream of that blest day when sirens and clocks might be ignored with impunity.

A querulous steam whistle suddenly shrieked into the grey.

This is the second of our unique series of stories by different authors written around the above situation. Mr. Gladwell is a new writer whose story "Of Common Type" in our first number created much favorable comment.
—The Editor.

Bertha Crimps sat up and yawned. The covering had again slipped from the narrow bed. She rose to her feet, revealing herself as fully dressed to flannel petticoat and bodice. Stockings hung in ugly folds about her feet; her hair

in unwholesome wreaths about her face. She tightened her clothing about her waist and twisted her hair into a tight knot.

Another siren blared its warning.

"Six o'clock!" she muttered as she struck a match and put it to the oil stove upon which stood a kettle.

Beneath the window was a mattress upon which two children slept peacefully beneath a heap of dirty rags. Bertha stepped across it and whipped down the newspaper which served as a curtain. The slightly increased light fell upon the two dirty, pinched little faces, causing Tommy on the outer edge of the mattress to sit up suddenly. "Go to sleep," said the woman gruffly, "and don't wake Jessie. Granny will give you your breakfast soon," and the child settled down once more beside his sister.

By the time the kettle was boiling Bertha had washed her face, tidied her hair and slipped into a dress of rough blue serge. She made tea and prepared bread and butter.

Bertha Crimps was not prepossessing as she took great bites out of the thick slices with strong white teeth, washing it down half-eaten with deep gulps of tea; a heavy white face with dark eyes and broad, sullen mouth, set upon a squat, powerful-looking body.

Another siren.

She finished hurriedly, slipped into hat and coat and wiped her mouth across her hand.

Then she went to the further end of the large, bleak room where another bed was visible in the gloom. She roused the old woman sleeping noisily thereon. "Mother, I'm going now!" and without waiting for a reply, opened the door and slipped out.



A BOOT factory, noisy and odorous. Bertha ignored the chaff and gossip of her fellow workers sullenly. Her work was purely mechanical and she performed it without enthusiasm. So sodden was she with the habit of it that it had even ceased to be a bore.

To-day she scowled even more than was general upon the gaiety of the women and girls around her. The chorus of, "He said, he did" and "I told him!" distracted her mind from that which she was striving hard to recapture in her mind—the details of a dream she seemed to have had the night before.

But it was too vague for reproduction and she went off into a daydream of her own suggested by the only occurrence she could remember—the clink of coins. Gold perhaps, gold to count, gold to wallow in up to the elbows, to count and sort and play with in the long evenings, but never, never to spend or part with! A glorious dream thrilling the soul with its mere suggestion but never likely to materialize.

Six o'clock boomed from steeple and shrilled from factory as Bertha Crimps turned once again into Angel Court. The cool spring night seemed to cast an uneasy air of secrecy over this stagnant backwater of civilization. Flickering candles and lamps behind the grimy windows appeared unwilling to assist in the illumination of such squalor.

Bertha's residence was one room of the large stone house which stood at one end of the court—a house once, no doubt, of pretentious aspect standing in its own grounds and sheltering the respectability of a mere family but now degraded to the level of a tenement and home to a hundred souls. It was essentially home to Bertha Crimps. She had known no other since marriage and now that her marriage was a thing of the past she still clung to the place where her little romance had been played out and where her children had been born. Crimps himself had been swallowed up in the cataclysm of War—dead perhaps; deserter,—who cared?

Bertha passed through the great door which always stood open. She felt no repugnance at the odorous hallway; no revulsion from the dark stairway which creaked oozyly as she ascended.

A door opened down the corridor and Tommy came out diffidently, his little sister following behind. From the room came the sound of sizzling fat and the smell of frying onions.

"Gwamm's awful mad corse youse late," said the boy tonelessly, neither looking to nor expecting any caress from his mother.

"Es! Es! assented Jessie vigorously.

"Hell!" exclaimed the woman frowning, pushing the children aside as she strode into

the room. "What do you mean? I'm not late. It's only just blown six!" she continued to the old woman who stood by the table already dressed in cape and bonnet of frowsy black.

Mrs. Barnes arranged her bonnet with uncertain fingers and pulled her cloak close around her scrawny throat. She was a cruel looking old woman; her long nose suggested a bird of vulpine tendency.

"It helps so when you come home quick," said the old woman peevishly. "I ain't so quick as I used to be in getting down to the Street and it takes me nigh half an hour to get to the offices. If I loses my job there's only yourself to blame and I shan't get another these days."

"You'd better not waste time jawing then," said Bertha sullenly.

"There's onions in the fat and bread in the cupboard," said Mrs. Barnes, and went out, closing the door heavily behind her.

Intercourse between mother and daughter was usually limited to this scant interchange of speech, except on weekends when they were both free all day Sunday.

BERTHA kicked off her shoes and removed her hat. The children watched her timidly, sitting quietly on the mattress which formed their bed. They watched her every movement while she inelegantly fed herself on onions and bread, after which she threw herself on the bed and was soon fast asleep.

Tommy moved cautiously.

"Now," he whispered to Jessie, "I get Gwamma's pretty cents and we'll play wiv them."

Two hours passed. A sudden knocking at the door aroused the sleeping woman. She sprang to her feet. The candle was guttering in the holder and the two children were dozing in the furthest corner of the room huddled over their playthings. Bertha smoothed her hair mechanically and opened the door an inch or two in order to view the intruder.

"Oh! That's Mrs. Crimps isn't it?" exclaimed a pleasant feminine voice through the opening. "I know it's frightfully late to call, but I was downstairs to see the little Bilinski baby that's sick and I thought I would just drop in to see how Mrs. Barnes is getting along.

"She's all right!" muttered Bertha ungraciously, opening the door a further inch or two but standing so that the young lady could not enter without pushing her aside.

But Sister Margaret, visiting nurse from the nearby hospital, was used to these rebuffs and her voice continued as pleasant as ever, "No more rheumatism? And Tommy and Jessie? All right too?"



"Yes," said Bertha shortly.

The short conversation had aroused both children to consciousness and on hearing his name Tommy moved forward into view of the visitor, a young person who, because of her unchanging freshness and amiability, claimed more of his affection than any person he had hitherto met.

"Hello!" exclaimed Margaret heartily, "How's Tommy?"

Bertha looked on resentfully, restraining an itching impulse to punch the child's head and slam the door viciously.

Tommy looked up adoringly at the vague figure just revealed against the black background of the passage beyond. No detail was plain but he was sure that the dear grey eyes were smiling down at him. Could he not feel his little heart swell with tenderness and joy and an inexpressible desire to prove his devotion to this bright spirit of sympathy.

"I give you sumfin," said Tommy suddenly and ran back into the room now only fitfully illuminated by the last dying gasps of the candle end.

Tommy returned holding out one dirty, tightly clenched little fist to Sister Margaret. The nurse held out her hand and felt a hard, round object pressed into her palm. She held it up to look at it but was unable to discern its character.

"I hope it's nothing valuable, Mrs. Crimps," said Margaret, "May I really keep it Tommy?"

Bertha laughed grimly.

"It's not valuable you bet," she mumbled. "Good-night," and she made as though to close the door, pulling Tommy backwards by the collar of his thin little sweater.

Sister Margaret's cheeriness persisted. "Good-night, Mrs. Crimps," she said, "I'm glad to hear that your Mother is better. Good-night Tommy."

THE door shut abruptly and Sister Margaret had to grope her way carefully down the dark stairs, while Bertha muttered "Go to Hell," and returned back to her disturbed slumbers. This time, however, she blew out the light, loosened her clothing and prepared for sleep in earnest. Tommy and his sister had to find the way to their bed as best they could and the child whimpered with misery as he crept beneath the old skirt which formed his covering.

And again that night Bertha had that strange waking vision of an old woman counting gold by candlelight, which vision, so soon as ever she turned on her bed to verify the details, vanished into darkness.

THE next day was Saturday, and half day at the factory.

In the afternoon Bertha took a bag and set out to purchase the few things needed for the Sunday meal. In the hall of the old house she met Sister Margaret coming out of a room on the ground floor. She tried to hurry out without speaking to the girl but Margaret was too swift for her.

"I was coming to see you, Mrs. Crimps," began the nurse brightly.

"Ho, yes?"

"I have just looked at the thing your Tommy gave me yesterday," continued Margaret opening her handbag and looking for something in its depths. "What do you think it is?"

"Guess you can keep it," mumbled Bertha moving onwards, "something the kid found to play with and can't be much good."

"But it is," said Margaret, taking a step forward in order to keep up with Bertha Crimps and holding out a shining object, "it's a twenty-dollar gold piece and I cannot think where the child can have got hold of it."

Bertha was startled for a moment out of her usual surliness of spirit. "Why, it must be my mother's," she said in a voice almost normal in its pleasant surprise. She was afraid at once that she had said too much and relapsed into sullen silence. Margaret placed the coin in Bertha's hand. The woman's eyes caressed it greedily.

"I'm so glad the child gave it to me and did not lose it," said Margaret.

Bertha did not reply but looked again at the gold with half-closed eyes and cruelly curved lips as though she thought of something beyond the mere possession of one twenty dollar gold piece. The silence persisted and Margaret felt abashed at the cruel intensity of hate and greed shadowed in the eyes of Bertha Crimps. The nurse moved off briskly leaving the woman in the middle of the hallway gazing at the coin in her hand.

Bertha soon came to herself. There was new purpose in her steps as she again ascended the stairs instead of proceeding on her shopping tour. She was in the throes of a great desire; an all consuming fever to prove at once whether or not that which she had dimly perceived as a dream the two nights before could possibly have any foundation in reality.

The children were alone listlessly reclining upon the mattress beneath the window. After she had taken off her hat and coat Bertha sat down on the bed and called Tommy to her. She had become much calmer now that she had decided her course of action. She exhibited the gold piece before the startled child.



"Where did you get this, Tommy?" she asked harshly.

The child began to cry in fear. "It's one of Gwamma's cents—" he stammered brokenly, "but she has got a lot of them she has—"

"Don't howl," said Bertha shaking the boy by the shoulder, "where does she keep them?"

"In the cupboard—down there," sobbed Tommy pointing. Jessie now broke into sympathetic snivellings.

"Don't now!" growled Bertha pushing her backwards as she passed the mattress on her way to the cupboard in the corner.

It was too dark to see anything but the plates on the top shelves so Bertha lit a candle and bent to explore the dim region of the spaces beneath. To all appearance it had not been disturbed for ages. Bertha knelt to the task, clearing out the accumulation of rubbish and throwing it behind her. First came a motley collection of old boots and newspapers, then a bundle of rags and a great deal of dust.

Tommy summoned up his courage to speak.

"She beated us for having them out last night to play wiv," he said plaintively.

"Get to bed," said Bertha without ceasing her excavations, "you too Jessie. Get to bed and don't let me hear a sound from you or I'll beat you too."

The children crept off towards their mattress like two little cowed pups.

Presently Bertha drew forth a preserve jar wrapped in rag. It was strangely heavy and clinked as it was moved. Then followed another and another and then a tin canister tied with a piece of string and a cigar box bound round with an old length of dirty pale blue ribbon.

Bertha put the candle upon the table and placed all the receptacles beside it. Then she seated herself and began to inspect her discovery. In the first jar was a number of gold pieces like the one Margaret had restored to her. The cigar box contained more all neatly stacked in piles of ten or so. Bertha scattered them upon the table and opened the other jars and boxes. Soon there was a heap of gold of no mean size upon the table. Bertha's eyes grew hard and her lips curved with greedy speculation. She forgot her surroundings, the wide-eyed children crouched beneath the window, and the whole world, as she plunged her arms to the elbows into the shimmering mass.

Time passed. What a glorious, soulwarming satisfaction in handling the golden glory! The children fell asleep, the candle burned low and still the woman wallowed on, dreamily caressing the hard, round coins as though they were capable of returning her affection.

STEPS upon the stairs. The woman's heart jumped. Her mother was returning early. In sudden panic she rose, intending in the first shock of her surprise to lock the door. No, that was no use, and no time to put the gold back into the boxes! She took great handfuls and dropped them into her lap, then, making a sack of her lifted skirt, crossed noiselessly to the bed and spilt it thereon. Two journeys thus—still the slow steps upon the stairs. It might not be her mother after all. A pause to listen. The steps were coming along the passage. Frantically the woman took another heap of coins and swept them into her skirt. The door opened and Mrs. Barnes stood on the threshold.

"Ha! Ha!" said the old woman as her eyes took in the scene, "So!" Her bent form seemed suddenly virilised by the intense hatred burning in her eyes. This gold was her life blood, her deepest reason for living, the object of all her distorted affection and desire.

For a moment mother and daughter stood regarding each other warily, Bertha with her skirt upraised and one hand in the act of sweeping gold into it; each waiting for the other to make the first move.

Mrs. Barnes closed the door softly and advanced slowly into the room.

"Let that alone. It's mine!" she snarled.

"Like Hell it is," replied Bertha with a short laugh. Her hand instinctively closed tighter upon the coins.

Mrs. Barnes came closer to the table, her eyes fixed upon Bertha. She took up one of the empty jam jars and raised it above her head.

"Drop it you," she exclaimed hoarsely, "let it alone or I'll brain you."

Bertha laughed again, mockingly.

The old woman, goaded beyond control, flung the jar with force magnified by anger. It struck Bertha in the breast causing her to drop her skirt so that gold cascaded over the floor and trundled in glittering, musical circles around the room.

"Ah—h!" snarled Bertha in return, her indeterminate mood changing at once to a fury as intense and as pitiless as her mother's. She grabbed at the cigar box and flung it at the old woman catching her full on the jaw. Mrs. Barnes flung off her cloak and rushed at her daughter,—arms up, fingers with horrible nails glinting, distended to the utmost.

Bertha put out her hand to stay the old woman's rush, but in vain. Mrs. Barnes made one wild leap and caught her daughter's black hair, pulling it down in great handfuls so that tears stood in Bertha's eyes.

"Thief!" panted the old woman, "Thief! Thief!—"



"Old cat! Cat! Hell cat!" hissed Bertha.

Suddenly she gripped the old woman about the body, lifted her high in powerful arms and flung her across the narrow bed behind her. With a thud the old woman's head struck the wall and she fell back limp. Bertha straightened up breathing with difficulty. The fight had been strangely silent so that the children still slept.

"I'll teach yo to call me a — — — thief," sneered Bertha and she gave Mrs. Barnes a hard punch in the stomach. Mrs. Barnes did not move. Bertha stood looking down for a moment with open mouth.

"Can't beat me like you can the kid," said Bertha again kicking the limp feet which hung over the edge of the bed.

The old woman opened her eyes and made as though to get up but fell back again in a heap. She directed a look of hatred at her daughter which Bertha returned with a grimace. For a few more seconds she stood looking down. Then her glance fell upon a gold piece upon the floor. She stooped to pick it up.

Then another and another—

Half an hour passed. The candle was flickering uncertainly. Bertha lit another and sat down to the table where the gold was once again gleaming in heaps.

"I don't care if she is dead," she muttered as she began to arrange the coins in heaps of tens, "she shouldn't have struck me anyway."

The night passed. The count was complete and Bertha sat dreaming.

"Six hundred and fourteen!" she mused.

Then, with sudden inspiration she rose and crossed to the bed. Stooping, she pushed aside the unconscious body of her mother and dragged her own blue coat from beneath her. From the pocket she produced another gold piece. Then she sat down again at the table and placed it on the last little incomplete heap before her.

"Six hundred and fifteen, and all mine!" she thought with satisfaction, and sat gazing at the glittering piles until weariness overcame her and she fell forward on the table and slept.

Evening

By Alice Brewer

*Afar I hear a bird's wild, wistful calling.
It seems the voice of Day itself is falling
Like benison upon the velvet of the dusk;
While, touched with evening mystery, the scent of musk
Floats like a forest of cloud-shadows on the air—
Evening is here!*

*Trailing white mists float softly—softly vanish;
A shy veiled moon strives timidly to banish
The glittering scythes still flaming in the western sky;
Bright capes, the golden pomp of towering mountains high,
The amethystine clouds, with crimson ocean soon
Will keep their trysts.*

*Rippling the air, his pointed wings a-dipping
Like dusky oars, a swallow sails, outstripping
The swift wild flight of Day; a chaste and icy spell
Falls o'er the shadowed surface of a pool; a bell
Rings from afar—the chimes like fugitives take flight—
Evening so fair!*

*Dun silv'ry peace on shore and wave and wood;
Star-flowers a-shine; a bird's song like a flood
Of dripping pearls; moonlight in silver clothes the foam,
Dimming the phosphorescent fires in sea's curled comb.
With purple folded pinions, star-crowned stands the Night!
Evening has flown!*



The Eyes of the Virgin

By MAURICE INSKIPP

Mr. Inskipp made a decided hit with his story "The Winking Eye." Here is another that we consider even better. What is your opinion?



HE chimes of the chapel bell of the monastery of St. Augustine were being wafted across the sunlit valley of the Rhone. It was Sunday morning, and somber-clad monks walked sedately across the little courtyard. Their minds were full of a pious expectation, for the prior was to preach the last of his series of sermons upon the virtues of the blessed Virgin.

The prior was a holy man, as befitted his office. Considered devout, even amongst men who had consecrated their lives to religious devotion, he was especially devoted to the Virgin Mary, and these sermons would always be of blessed memory to the brethren, for he had spoken as one who is inspired.

The roll of the organ, blended with the voices, died away amongst the beams of the ancient roof in a sweet whisper of sound, and the prior arose, the light from an exquisite stained-glass window lighting up his saintly face.

"Brethren," he began, "this is the last of the series of sermons in which my feeble tongue has striven to expound upon the virtues of the mother of Christ. To-day, I am going to speak upon our blessed Lady's eyes; for does not the soul of one so spiritual and bright shine through the flesh as the rays of a lamp shine through polished glass?"

As the prior uttered these words, the heads of his hearers all turned in one direction—to the niche in the wall where stood the shrine of the Virgin Mary. The soft light of the candles playing on the exquisite contour of her face, caused her eyes to shine with wonderful red and white lights, for they were monstrous diamonds set with consummate skill. The stones had been presented to the monastery in the days of Louis XVI. Visitors gazed at them with wonder and admiration.

"Worthless as glass, in comparison to one glance of compassion from the eyes of the Holy Mother herself," said the prior in conclusion.

NOW, the peasantry that dwelt in the surrounding valley were suffering from the poverty caused by the great war. There were women and little children with the bread-

winner gone, never to return. There were young men turned suddenly old, and old folks with the memory of the coming of the government despatch that they all had dreaded. One there was for whom the prior felt especial compassion, Jacques, the nineteen year old son of old Pierre, the miller, who was to be seen all day sitting in a basket chair before the cottage door, the two stumps of his legs sticking out in front of him.

One day the prior asked Jacques if there was anything he would like, to relieve the tedium of his life.

"There is one thing, father, I would like above all else," the boy replied.

"What is that, my son?"

"If I could have one of those cripple-chairs that can be propelled with the arms, I might one day forget that I have no legs."

The prior turned sadly away. The monastery was not a wealthy one, and it grieved him to see so much suffering that he could not relieve. As he walked home, he pondered upon what he would do if he had the means. A cripple-chair for Jacques, a warm coat for old mother Angot, whose rheumatism was so bad when the weather was wet that she could do nothing but sit and grumble in the chimney-corner; a doll here, a pair of crutches there—in fact, a host of things that the kindly heart of the old man suggested. "Oh, Holy Mother," he cried, "Thine eyes must weep at the sight of so much suffering!" He paused abruptly in his walk. The words that he had uttered had caused him to see, as in a vision, the sparkling and costly stones that formed the eyes of the Virgin's image in the niche in the chapel wall. "The price of these," he muttered, "would provide these things." Then, aghast at the fearful thought, he hurried on, striving to cast it from his mind. Arriving home, he hastened to the chapel, prostrating himself before the shrine to beg forgiveness for the bare idea of such sacrilege.

IT was Autumn, and tourists were beginning to visit the village. There were many rings at the monastery bell, for the Gothic beauty of the little chapel was well known. One day an American and his wife called. The prior and brother Ambrose showed them round. As they stood before the shrine, the prior told them the story of the Virgin's eyes. They



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were deeply interested, and the American made a close scrutiny of the gems.

"I know stones," he remarked, "these must be worth at least twenty thousand francs."

"What beautiful ear-drops they would make," his wife whispered.

The prior overheard the words, and he hurried the visitors from the chapel. In the refectory, where it was the custom to offer guests a glass of wine, the American brought up the subject again.

"I suppose," he said, "you would not part with those stones for more than twenty thousand francs."

"Oh, no," the prior answered, "not for much more than twenty thousand francs."

The visitors departed. The American smilingly remarked that they would pay them another visit before leaving the country.

The prior immediately hurried to his room, greatly disturbed. The American's words had seemed an echo of his own thought, conceived on the return from his visit to cripple Jacques. He threw himself upon his knees to pray. But it seemed as though the Tempter himself stood beside him, for, mingling with the prayer, these words would keep repeating in his mind — "Twenty thousand francs! — twenty thousand francs!"

Old Pierre, the miller, had a daughter, Suzette. Suzette was one of the happy ones, for her lover had come back from the trenches safe and sound. They were to be married next Spring, and he had brought with him a wonderful present from one of the great Paris shops, a locket set, one each side, with enormous diamonds. It is true that they were only paste. But what did that matter, for were they not her lover's gift, and did they not sparkle "just like real ones?" Suzette showed the locket one day with great pride to the prior. The prior had simulated staggering astonishment at sight of such a gift, much to Suzette's delight.

The weeks sped by, and the prior went his daily rounds. But the mind of the old man was troubled. The thought of what he could do with the price of the stones in the Virgin's head obsessed him. One day he sat talking with Jacques, who was busily engaged in knitting with wool, his only occupation. It was Monday, and the week's washing lay in a corner. Suzette rolled up her sleeves, and then, unclasping the precious locket from her neck, she laid it on a table beside the door. The prior gazed at it as it lay, one stone scintillating in the sun. The Tempter stole behind him and whispered in his ear: "The stones are a wonderful imitation. The brethren would never notice the difference." The prior seemed as one hypnotized. He could

THE EYES OF THE VIRGIN

not remove his gaze, and his brow became moist with the intensity of the struggle raging within him. The Tempter won. As the prior strode home, the locket was clasped tightly within his palm.

There ensued a week of troubled, sleepless nights. The prior could not eat, and his face became drawn and haggard. One night, when the brethren were in their cells, he stole to the chapel and removed the stones from the Virgin's head, inserting the paste ones from the locket in their stead. The deed once done, a strange calm stole over him. "Satan will no longer trouble me," he muttered, "he has won me for his own."

HE continually pondered on the best means of disposing of the stones. But it seemed as though the way were to be made easy for him, for two days later the American and his wife again rang the monastery bell. Brother Ambrose hurried to admit them.

"I will conduct our visitors myself," remarked the prior.

Ambrose turned away. His face was troubled.

The prior led his visitors at once to the chapel. He drew the American immediately to one side.

"Do you wish to buy the stones in the Virgin's head?" he quavered.

The American seemed greatly surprised.

"That is what I came for," he answered.

"How much?" again quavered the prior.

"The sum mentioned."

"Twenty — thousand — francs?" the prior gasped.

The American nodded. The prior thrust his hand into his blouse and drew forth a small packet. With averted eyes, he held it out. He felt it taken from his grasp and a small piece of paper thrust between his trembling fingers. The next instant he was crouching on a seat. There was the sound of great sobs.

An hour passed, and the prior's head still rested upon his arms. He felt as one who is already doomed to perdition. He was suddenly aroused by the sound of soft footsteps. Raising his head, he observed Ambrose walk down the nave. Arriving at the shrine, Ambrose threw himself upon the floor and began to sob as the prior had sobbed an hour previous. The prior was mystified. Surely there could not be another with a trouble like his own.

"Saved! — saved!" sobbed Ambrose.

Then, rising to his feet, Ambrose approached the image. He commenced to remove the stones that the prior had inserted such a short time before. "Am I so soon discovered?" gasped the prior, rising from his seat in order to watch more closely. To his astonishment,



he saw Ambrose replace the stones he had just removed with two others from a leathern wallet.

His work completed, Ambrose turned to depart, when, catching sight of the prior, he stumbled with a cry of terror to his knees. The prior advanced towards him.

"The stones are back," cried Ambrose in a choking voice. Then—"Let me confess!—Let me confess!"

"Confess then, brother," said the mystified prior.

"When the American tourist," began Ambrose, when he had grown calmer, "mentioned the probable worth of the stones, a great temptation assailed me. I was possessed of a lust for gold. I went to the hotel and saw the American. After great haggling over the price, he agreed to pay the twenty thousand francs. It was arranged that he was to procure duplicates of paste from Paris, which I was to substitute for the real gems, giving them to him upon his next visit. You to-day pre-

vented me—thank God!—by conducting the visitors yourself."

"When," gasped the prior, "did you first change the stones?"

"Ten days ago."

"Then the stones in the Virgin's head have for ten days been paste?"

"They have."

The prior's eyes rested upon Ambrose, and yet they seemed to be gazing into an immensity of space. A gust of the wind that had sprung up in the twilight rattled the door and came eddying down the nave. It snatched the loosely held paper from the prior's fingers and carried it towards the candles before the shrine, where it held it, fluttering, for a second above the flame of one. As the paper burned, the blaze drew fiery lights from the Virgin's eyes.

The prior crossed himself slowly. When he spoke, there was awe and wonder in his voice.

"Wonderful are the ways of God. My brother, let us pray."

The Adventurer

By Nina Margaret Mathison

*And shall my ardent eyes one day grow cold
Like those I pass and pity on the street,
Dreamless, unwondering, undesirous—old?
Creature of feeble loves, mild hates and sweet
Passivity. Shall I on earth's last crest
Sit waiting patiently till from the west
A faint voice calls, and silently and dark
A ghostly barge creeps up, and I embark?*

*Or shall death find me riding the mad waves.
Breasting the good salt foam, tasting its tang,
Clear-eyed, anticipant, with laughter gay,
Radiant as dawn whose beckoning finger weaves
A golden path to me, as with a song,
I leave Life's night to greet the unconquered day,*



A Bad Bargain

By FLORENCE B. FINK

The author of this story has won an enviable reputation as a writer of light verse and popular songs. THE QUILL takes pleasure in introducing her as a story writer.



HE big man by the window drummed restlessly against the cross-bar.

"I'd give five hundred dollars to know where Becker is."

The little man at the table glanced up with a shade of annoyance.

"I personally saw him on board the Transconia. I watched until she sailed. I have every reason to believe that he sailed with her."

"Yes, but how far?" snapped the other.

"For that I can only rely on your agent's report by wireless," was the prim reply.

"But it doesn't seem reason—"

There was a sharp rap at the door. The little man sprang up and crossed to it.

"I wish to see Mr. Perkins," came an abrupt voice.

"Ah—er—er—Mr. Perkins?" the little man hesitated.

"Never mind, Wardell," the big man called with a short laugh, "we've been trailed, I guess. Show him in."

THE little man stepped aside, and a broad-shouldered civilian in a black-checked blue pea-jacket, a fur-banded cap and khaki breeches, entered.

Perkins viewed him with surprise.

"Who are you?" he asked abruptly.

"That," replied the fellow, "is of secondary importance. Your chief interest lies in my reason for being here. I have an oil-lease for sale."

Perkins laughed—his curt, artificial laugh.

"Where?" he asked.

The man flushed. His eye flashed. His lips tightened.

"Within a mile from the spot on which we stand," he answered.

"Never heard of oil here!" retorted Perkins.

"Then why are you here?" the other flung at him.

Perkins looked him up and down and grinned coolly.

"Give me credit for knowing something besides oil!" he parried.

"I know you too well!" replied the other grimly, and checked himself.

"At that, you have the advantage!" com-

mented Perkins drily, "I do not know even your name."

"First—are you interested in this lease?"

"If it had oil—" Perkins hesitated.

"It has," asserted the stranger, "it is saturated in oil,—gray to black shale in clear anticlines with a limestone cap. I will take my oath that there are oil-pockets within one hundred feet of the surface."

"One hundred feet?" queried the magnate.

"Within one hundred feet," asserted the visitor.

"Why don't you work it then?" sneered the other.

"I need money—now!" I must have five hundred dollars. I will sell this lease for that sum—on one condition—the offer must be taken within three days. After that, I shall hold it myself."

"Five hundred dollars—for an oil—lease!" laughed Perkins. "And oil on the surface, too?"

"There is oil under the surface!" snapped the owner, flushing. "Here is the description of the lease." He passed a paper to the oil-man. "You have today and tomorrow to investigate. I must have the cash in hand by Thursday noon—or the offer lapses! Good-day, sirs!" and he walked out.

Perkins grimaced and stared after the retreating figure.

"I've seen that face somewhere before," he said. "Remember him?" he turned to his secretary.

"I could declare I never met him," replied the little man positively. "I remember voices—one would not easily forget his voice."

"Bah, it would change!"

"Not to one who remembers voices," declared Wardell.

Perkins returned to his place by the window. He opened the paper and examined it carefully.

"Knows something of engineering at any rate,"—he commented, "probably expects to impress me with this technical stuff. Here, Wardell,"—he crossed over and laid the sheets down on the other's table, "we might take a run out there tomorrow—if the records show that lease.—He says it's off the lake, a little up the river—Have a fishing-trip on—may



get the guide to run me in there to size up that saturated shale!"

He crossed to pick up his cap and his tackle.

"Even the fish may taste of oil out here!" he scoffed as he went out.

He returned before dinner with a weighty string but he passed it over lightly. He had facts of more importance.

"How much of that land is leased?" he asked Wardell.

"There are three others in to the limit. This Eldridge himself is holding more."

"Wants to start a boom, eh?"

"It might be that," admitted the secretary. He considered the matter gravely.

"You saw the shale?" he ventured.

"It's a hummer—from the surface—but you can't tell for sure till the baler or the gas brings up the stuff. The guide says the settlers round about—trappers and Frenchmen and woodsmen—use it, but that doesn't say there's enough for a spouter—might mean a pocket or two with just enough seepage to keep her coming. We'll take a look around there tomorrow. He wants five hundred for it now—I wonder what he'll take by Thursday!"

NEXT morning the two set off on foot. They did not take a guide. Even a greenhorn could scarcely have lost himself, prepared as they were—and they were no greenhorns.

They found the first traces of oil in a bank well within the mile from town.

"Pockets!" commented Perkins suspiciously. "Can't run out here."

"Why not?" asked Wardel, examining the gummy shale.

"Might as well say the town's built on it!" scoffed Perkins.

"You didn't notice the taste in the water then?" commented Wardel.

Perkins shot a sharp glance at him.

"That was why I took that fellow's say-so!" he answered abruptly.

Wardel raised his eyebrows and nodded slightly while a smile seemed to shine over his face although his lips retained their suppressed cynical line.

The two passed on in silence.

All day they wandered along the little stream that local usage dignified by the name of Shale River, or cut in from it to follow up oil-filmed streamlets, or stopped to investigate sparsely-clad cuttings.

Back at the hotel that evening over a late dinner served in their suite, Perkins tilted his water-glass jovially toward the light.

"Can almost see the oil on it—what about you, Wardell?"

"It's there, all right!" agreed Wardell and set his glass aside.

Almost as if this interchange had been the proper cue, a knock sounded on the corridor door.

Wardel answered it.

"Mr. Perkins engaged?" It was the visitor of the previous morning.

"Come right in!" called Perkins with heavy gaiety. "You're just in time for a piece of pie!"

The man entered and hesitated.

"At dinner!" he exclaimed apologetically. "I'll not disturb you now—in half an hour perhaps?"

Perkins ignored the hesitation.

"We took a look at that lease of yours today. Still think it's worth five hundred?"

"Anyone who knows oil, knows it's worth more."

"And if I should say I doubt it?"

"I should say you were lying." The tone was calm and cool and almost unemotional.

"Really?" Perkins' eyes snapped. "You are very sure of your opinion."

The man remained silent.

"Of course, there's a surface show and a gentle seepage all right but how can you prove there is any sort of reservoir. At that, the lease is a small item compared to the expense of drilling and testing it out. And suppose she never runs over a gallon or so a day—what can we do about it? No, the whole thing is speculation! There may be oil—but will it pay to get it?"

"You are not interested then?" inquired the other.

"Hut-tut! Off at an angle again, eh?—My dear fellow, you're altogether too touchy about this. I may be interested and yet consider your price a little bit over the limit."

"My price?" the stranger asked, and drew himself up. "Certainly, as you say, five hundred dollars is very little to what it may cost to work it—but if it is not worth five hundred, it is not worth a cent."

"Oh, I don't know!" retorted the oil-man airily. "Besides there's the matter of the other leases. If it gets out who bought this lease, I'm in for a heluva time to land the other fellows—see? And one little lease demands another. If I start in on this, I've got to go the whole way."

"Yes," said the other and shut his lips grimly. He stood for a half minute, head down, his eyes glancing rapidly from the cap in his hands to the man before him. "Well," he straightened finally, "if you have nothing further to say, I shall not detain you." He turned to the door.

"You'll be in tomorrow, will you?" asked Perkins, carelessly, not troubling to rise.

"No!" retorted the other, turning fiercely,



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"I am neither a beggar nor a Jew nor a two-faced financier! You know my terms—take 'em or leave 'em! There's oil there alright—and you know it! But, as you say, a well's the only way to prove it out, and a well-rig costs money—more than I've got or can get right now—My God!" his reserve broke suddenly. He crumpled into a chair by the door.

PERKINS snorted and turned back to his meal. He scented sentiment here. He never mixed sentiment with business. He never tolerated sentiment at all.

The man pulled himself together as suddenly as he had given way.

"Sorry!" he said abruptly, "it's because of my daughter—but you wouldn't understand—only—Becker will be here tomorrow. Then it probably doesn't matter. He may listen to reason! There is just one thing however." Defiance flashed from his eye. "About the other leases—I hold options on them till the first of May—and I'll have money to work them then!"

He clapped on his cap and walked out.

"Who did he say was coming?" Perkins asked of Wardel.

"Becker!" returned the other dazedly.

"Yes—Becker!" A moment of heavy silence. "I wonder if it was a bluff?"

"I might ask if they expect him at the hotel?"

"Did they expect us?" countered Perkins.

"Someone must have told him."

"Who told him about me?"

"That's very true," pondered Wardell. Perkins jumped up.

"When does the train get in tomorrow?"

"At twelve-fifteen."

"Wire the conductor, asking if Becker is on. Sign my name—he knows me!" snapped the magnate.

"But—"

"He travels on a pass, doesn't he?"

"Very likely."

"Then get that message off at once. And say,"—as Wardel made for the door! "don't trust the agent, take it in to the despatcher yourself and stick around till he sends it. Better find out how soon he can get an answer. Tell him it's worth a ten-spot to rush it over as soon as it comes."

Wardel nodded, crammed on his hat, and went out. He bettered his instructions by waiting for the answer, sending word to his master to that effect.

MEANWHILE Perkins had a rather unpleasant couple of hours. Becker coming! Could it be true? He had more than half-doubted this sudden indisposition, this trip to European baths—with an oil-boom raging in virgin soil! And to think of the

A BAD BARGAIN

money squandered on agents and messages and wireless reports and what-not—Becker on board! On the ship in mid-ocean or—the north-bound train?

And the lease! He had been a fool to hesitate. He knew there was oil there—barrels of it! It was worth many times five hundred—and Becker would get it unless he bettered the price. He would lose the vantage his early arrival had given him. All the other property would be up too! He and Becker bidding against each other!

He half resolved to go and see the fellow if the wire confirmed his information. He went out to ask the hotelman if he knew where Eldridge lived.

"Mr. Eldridge?" that worthy corrected him. "That is the gentleman who was just in to see you?"

"Oh Mister Eldridge, is it?" laughed Perkins. "And pray, where does Mister Eldridge live?"

The hotel-man stiffened slightly, and supplied the information.

"Thank you!" returned Perkins with equal brevity and the soothing thought, "you'd pipe a different tune, my fine fellow, if you knew who I am!"

When Wardel came with the message, Perkins read the answer in his face.

"Becker on board," the yellow sheet repeated.

"Eldridge is in the lobby," Wardel reported with an obvious suggestion in his tone.

"I'll see him!" snapped Perkins. "Draw up those papers!"

Eldridge stared coolly at him as he approached.

"I wish to speak with you just a minute, Eldridge," the magnate announced with all the assurance he could muster, "I've been reconsidering your proposition."

"Yes," said Eldridge flatly.

"I—I am going north on tomorrow's train." He made the decision on the moment. "If you hold by the original terms, I can have the papers made out in a few minutes—just a few minutes."

"Yes," Eldridge replied, "the terms still hold."

"And about those—options? How about them?"

"I intend to prove them myself—I may sell them later—on a royalty basis."

"Mr. Wardel—hem!—Will you come into my office?" Perkins really felt most uncomfortable.

"Not tonight, thank you!" the other returned. "But I will come tomorrow—before train-time. I shall bring my papers. You will, of course, have the money in cash?"



"Yes," agreed Perkins, "in cash."

"That is quite satisfactory then," Eldridge remarked, raised his hat, and walked off.

Perkins looked after him and swore—not loudly but fervently. Then he went back to his suite and announced the result of the interview to Wardel.

"You intend to go on tomorrow?" queried that individual.

"Why stay here?" parried Perkins. "A couple of leases will take all that's left. You can look after that tomorrow morning."

FIFTEEN minutes before the train arrived on the following morning, Eldridge rapped at Perkins' door. Five minutes later the deal was closed.

"Quite sure you don't wish to sell out your options?" queried Perkins.

"Quite!" replied Eldridge, smiling quietly.

He picked up the slender sheaf of notes and flicked them over.

"I wonder," he said, speaking half to himself, "if the facts of this case would interest you. One summer, you had a chauffeur whom you used to call Smith—"

"You are Smith!" hissed Perkins.

"I see you remember that at least!" returned the other. "Did you never find out my real name?"

Perkins merely glared at him.

"For myself—I scarcely wonder—But your daughter—"

"I disowned her!"

"Why? Because she married the man she loved? or because she married a poor student?"

"You were a chauffeur!"

"You seem to forget, Mr. Perkins, that not all of us can begin at the top." The shaft went home. Perkins had begun far down the scale.

"We have a small daughter," Eldridge continued, "two years ago—when she was little more than a year old, she had an accident," he paused to steady his voice, "an accident which threatened to maim her for life. This train," the distant "a-roo-hoo" of the whistle broke in dramatically, "is bringing a doctor, a specialist, who has had great success in such cases. Five hundred dollars is his price." His voice was slightly bitter. "I couldn't bring myself to beg it around town—I might have in the end—but you came. I knew the lease was worth more than five hundred dollars—I knew you'd buy. If you hadn't, I might have been forced to take your terms. If you had recognized me and learned of Lorna, you might have forced me to give them up—I could have done it for her sake. But you didn't—you had no pity—no love for anything but money—and when I knew I had to win—I knew you would come round." He paused. Then he put on his cap and crammed the money into his pocket.

"Mr. Perkins," he said, "you have made a good deal this day—but a bad bargain! You've got your oil—but I've got your daughter and my daughter and their love and—happiness."

"But Becker?" queried Perkins.

"Becker?—That's the specialist—son of old Becker, you know."

The Lighted Lamp

By Lereine Ballantyne

*A lighted lamp through the twilight gleaming,
Where shadows crowd, in their silent way
Upon the path of the sunlight waning,
Till night comes, wearing her robe of grey.*

*A lighted lamp with it's shaft so golden,
That reaches out through the heavy gloom,
And lures us on, with our hearts ayearning
To share the cheer of a cosy room.*

*Was ever a beacon more inviting,
When one is ending a weary tramp—
To pause at night on a lonely hillside,
And see in the valley a lighted lamp.*



His Lady of the Stars

By NINA MARGARET MATHISON

Her father offered ten thousand dollars to the man who would marry her. The romance of an Indian princess and her English lover.



AD, I'll not be dragged into marrying anybody, least of all a contemptible white cad after your money. I prefer a clean Indian any time to a dirty white man. And I heard whispers. They said my mother was not your— Oh, it's horrible! Look out, Dad. I've got to ride. Likely,"—striking her pony a stinging lash with her riding whip—"likely I'll never come back."

She was off like a streak of light, heading toward the forest trail, a slim black-haired girl in buckskin breeches and khaki coat, barely touching the back of the wickedest-eyed pinto ever saddled. Something of the wind she seemed, and of the dazzling sunshine and the flaming sky. And dusk was creeping in between the giant pines and firs, throwing weird shadows across her path.

He intercepted her just as she entered a path almost hidden by bracken, and drawing his mare alongside, caught her pony's bridle.

"Gar sakes, Orma! What yer mean?" he drawled. "D' yer wanta kill Firefly?"

"Hands off, Simon!" Raising her whip as if to strike, the girl lifted a flaming face to the boy. "What do you mean, talking so to me?"

Simon hung his head while a dull red flooded his dark face. "Sorry, Orma. But I ben walkin' 'er up an' down sence the race and she ain't even had a drink yet. If yer goin' fur—"

"I'm going to the end of the world, Simon. I'm never going to stop."

"What's wrong, Orma?" Simon turned to emit a mouthful of tobacco juice. "You done fine in the race, comin' in ahead of all them swells. It was grand." He gave Firefly an affectionate pat on her neck where a red card dangled. "I knew you c'd do it," he said as pinto returned his affection with a wicked nip from her sharp teeth.

"Simon! You—heard?"

"Heard nothin'. What?"

"What Dad said. Why, where were you? It was after they announced my name at the race. Dad got up in the judge's stand and said I was his daughter and—O Simon, it was awful!"

"An' what?" Simon had dismounted and was standing at Firefly's head. He leaned awkwardly toward the girl.

"He offered—me for sale."

"Naw! You don't mean that!"

"Just as good. Said he'd give any white man who'd marry me within a year, twenty thousand dollars and five hundred horses."

Simon scratched his head.

"Gar sakes, Orma! Did he say that! But we're all right. Nobody can marry you without yer willin' an' yer not. Yer goin' to marry me. If any white devil dares—"

"But Simon," The girl's impetuous voice suddenly dropped to a whisper as she bent her head over her pony's neck. "I'm not going to marry you."

"You—said so."

"But I was only a little girl then. I've—"

"Then! Last Sunday night on the river!"

"Yes, I've grown up since then. O Simon, you can't understand, but there's—something about me, something strange. Look at me. Do I look like an Indian?"

"Well, yer Dad's white."

"And I'm white." She held out a slender hand toward him, white and delicate as a lady's. "If you didn't know, if you saw me in a grand house with ladies and gentlemen, would you think—"

"Aw, come now. Where'd you get such notions?"

His words were spoken carelessly but in his eyes she saw a fleeting expression, a look of fear at which she snatched.

"Simon!" She touched his chin with the butt of her whip. "Tell me. Do you know—anything? Haven't I got good blood in me even if my mother is a squaw?"

"Aw, wot's the difference? Yer good enough fer me."

"But Simon—"

"I see," said the breed slowly, his brown face turning purple. "Mebbe I'm not good enough fer—you."

He started to mount his black mare.

"Wait, Simon. You don't understand. If I'm half and half, why can't I say I'm white? Why do I have to be a squaw?"

"You never minded before."

"But things are different since—last night. Something's happened."

"What's happened? Has that Haggas guy—"



"No, I haven't seen Mr. Haggas. You remember last night—"

"When I left you tellin' that fella's fortune? What'd you send me away fer? I didn't like that fella's looks."

"O Simon! Didn't you see how tall and straight he was, and how pale and how sad his eyes?"

WITH terrific vividness it came back to her; the supper hour at the fair where the races were held, the tents along the midway undisturbed by visitors, herself sitting on a silk cushion in the tent which bore the name, "Beautiful Indian Princess Palmist," dressed in silk and lace, her long black braids falling over her shoulders, jewels glistening on her fingers, and Simon sprawled before her making slow, lazy love to her, as they waited for the evening business to begin. He had been teasing her to go for a paddle on the river when her fortune-telling was over for the night, and then it happened. He came in, the tall, graceful stranger with the deep serious brown eyes which would have been handsome if they had smiled. But they held a shadow. They haunted her.

No, Simon hadn't noticed anything about the stranger except that he had been the cause of his dismissal from the tent.

"What'd he do?" asked Simon sullenly. "I wouldn't 've went but when yer all dressed up like that in silks an' satin an' bead dangles an' all, lookin' like a real princess, I'm plumb scared. You ain't the little kid I know, that goes fishin' with me in the summer, bare-footed an' hair blowin' in the wind. What's yer Dad do it fer, anyways?"

"Oh, Dad's a man with a gypsy heart. He works steady all year and in the fall he just has to get out the old prairie schooner and—"

"What'd that fella do, I wanta know," Simon's hulky body seemed to draw itself into something like strength. "I knew yer Dad'd be sorry—"

"Do! He didn't do anything. He never said a word, but I could see he wasn't the usual kind that comes in for fun. He looked as if he'd reached the end of the rope and didn't care a hang. Seemed as if he needed somebody. I looked at his hand, and Simon, it was white and soft. He wasn't any rancher. He was a gentleman. At first I couldn't seem to say anything and then all of a sudden the words came from somewhere, I don't know where. Something like this I read, just as if I was reading from a book:

"You have not contentment. You have the desire, the big desire but you are too fearful. You dream but you do not climb. You have not the daring I see smiling eyes, eyes which shall beckon you like stars, which,

if you follow them, shall put flame into the dying fire of your heart. For them you shall shoot the rapids and climb the mountains, you shall make the long portage. And for love of them you shall not think it long nor hard. A dark shape threatens, but it dissolves in mist. You shall find great happiness."

"Simon!" The girl drew her hands together in a passionate clasp. "Simon, those are my eyes. I could start that flame burning in his heart."

The look of fear took possession of Simon's face again. "Did he—"

"No, he didn't say anything, but I knew. When he was gone there was something in here,"—putting her hand to her breast—"that told me. There was a pain—I could not describe it—something that went out of me when he went, and left my heart empty. I looked at my little world. I looked at the beads and tinsel and the paste diamonds on my dress and I hated them. I cried, 'Cheap! Ugly!' I tore them off. I went in before my mirror and my arms were bare and my dress was torn from my shoulder and from my breast, and I saw myself for the first time. I saw myself a woman, beautiful, alluring, white! I laughed and cried. I saw another world—His world, where I could shine, where I could be a lady and make men bow their knees to me."

She paused but Simon held his breath. No words would come.

"And then this morning to wake up to the same old world again, Mother stirring something smelly in a pot over the fire, crying kids, barking dogs and me—an Indian nobody again! I could not bear it. And then the race! It was glorious! It wasn't the winning, but the mad joy of going, of being free, of riding a horse with wings, the feeling of being carried—to your death probably and not caring! It seemed as if it wasn't Firefly I was riding, but Life. And then—Dad! It was awful! O Simon, don't you see I've got to go! I'm going to be a lady and then some day I'll find Him again and then—"

She turned her pony's head and rode savagely into the darkening forest, leaving her Indian lover standing in the path as completely beaten as her father had stood a few moments before. She turned eyes from the slouching figure of the dark-skinned boy to fill them with a picture of the stranger who was tall and straight and—elegant. His eyes haunted her. Why did they hold a shadow?

Darkness came and still she rode, intoxicated with the joy of escape. Suddenly Firefly came to a stop. She plunged and stood on her hind legs but not one step would she advance. Orma dismounted and walked a few steps, feeling her way cautiously in the



darkness. She thought she could hear water. She knew she was on the edge of an embankment. She was just turning when her foot slipped. She caught at a branch, missed it, and began to slide into oblivion.

WHEN she opened her eyes she could see nothing. Her mind was hazy. She could hear water lapping against rocks. Her hand stole cautiously from her side and became entangled in shreds of wiry moss. Her foot reached out and struck a boulder. She made an effort to rise but a sharp spasm of pain prevented her. In a flash came the recollection of what had happened. She put her hand to her head. It was throbbing with pain. She longed to sink back into the restful darkness again. Suddenly from behind the clouds the moon looked forth, revealing everything to her, the edge of the lake not three feet away, the boulder which had obstructed her further descent, and dimly through the trees what seemed to be a log shack. Then just as suddenly as it had come, the light left her and she began to slip down into the kindly darkness again. But she was caught up sharply by a sound, music, it seemed, wistful, yearning, sadder and sweeter than anything she had ever heard. It called her. It was kind. It knew the desperate ache in her heart. She must make an effort to find it. And slowly, painfully she began to creep in the direction from which it came.

When her eyes opened again it was morning. She was lying in a room which, aureoled in the golden light of the early sun, appeared like a new and different world to her. She had never seen anything so beautiful. There was a table with books in soft, dull-colored covers, not like the gaudy ones she was accustomed to seeing. And pictures, some on the walls, some apparently only partly finished lying on the table pinned to a frame, filled the room with gentle radiance. And lying on the arm of a chair as if dropped there suddenly, the source of the strange music which had called to her, a beautiful violin. Soft blue curtains hid a doorway to the right, while another at the back of the room revealed another room with shelves of dishes and a steaming kettle on the stove. Someone was moving softly out there. Closing her eyes, she thought, "This is what—His world would be like." And strangely enough, she had a feeling of being at home.

Then a miracle happened. Someone moved across the floor from the other room and—He was standing before her. He, the man of her dreams, the tall, elegant stranger whose palm had lain in her own the day before. He was holding a tray, a cup which steamed and a plate of golden toast.

"Oh, it's beautiful, beautiful!" she sobbed. "More beautiful than I had dreamed! It's—heaven, isn't it?"

"What! My shack?" He laughed, thinking, no doubt, his patient might be delirious. "No, it's the other—At least it was before you came last night. Tell me, how do you feel? How did it happen? Can you remember? Take a sup of coffee."

He held the cup to her lips. His eyes looked deep into hers, but she saw no recognition in them. His gaze wandered to her throat, to where not even the rough riding suit could hide the delicate curves of her slim, beautiful body, and a fierce fire leaped into his eyes which made her tremble but which she could not interpret. She did not know how excruciating a man's loneliness can become.

"Remember?" she was saying. "Oh, where is Firefly? Poor Firefly!" she exclaimed.

"Firefly?"

"My pony! I left her. It was getting dark and I was afraid I'd lost the trail, and I walked ahead to see. A rock slipped and I fell. I was—running away." She hung her head.

"From whom—or what?"

"I don't know. Everything. I couldn't stand it. I wanted to be a lady." Then a sudden inspiration seized her. "Will you teach me?"

"I!" he gasped, and the light fled from his eyes. "Why child, I—"

He turned away and suddenly his glance rested on a photograph on the rough stone mantle. He rose and stood before it.

"My mother," he said simply. He walked a few paces and then came back and sat down beside the couch again.

"My mother," he said unsteadily, "was a lady."

"I'm sure of it," whispered the girl softly.

"She loved everything that is beautiful. She would have loved you, child. She taught me what a gentleman should be. She said he was first of all brave. He was never a quitter. He never would run away from a hard job if it happened to be his job."

"Oh, do you mean?"—cried the girl. The implication of his words smote her. She turned hungrily to fill her eyes with it all, the books, the pictures, the beautiful serenity of it. To have to go back to the cheap, hideous ugliness of her former life . . . "Oh, it's a beautiful world where you live. Won't you let me stay?"

"You! Stay!" he cried. "I wasn't thinking of you, child. I was thinking of myself. I failed her. I was a quitter. But I'm going back. You're going to send me back." Suddenly he dropped on his knees and laid his head against her quivering body. And it was



not his poor frail body with its flame extinguished by the trust which had looked out of those clear, blue-black eyes, which knelt. It was his soul into which the flame had crept and was now consuming everything in its path.

"A lady!" he cried taking her hand. "Dear, you are a lady. You are beautiful. You are splendid. Do you know what you are? You are my Lady of the Stars. You are going to pull me up out of the mire. You've shown me something. I'm going to paint it. I've only been daubing foolish things before, but now! . . . You must go now, sweetheart. If anyone should come . . . You must let me take you home and I shall come often . . ."

The light in the girl's eyes wavered an instant and then flickered out.

"No. You cannot, must not ever come. You don't understand. Oh, I shall read and acquaint myself with all beautiful things and some day—"

A ROUGH knock shook the door. A look of fear passed over Grant Hillyard's face. Instinctively his hand felt for a weapon at his belt.

"Anybody home?" shouted a man's voice. And Hillyard opened the door a crack.

"Morning, sir! Seen anything of a girl—Grant Hillyard! By the great—"

"Haggas!" The hand at Hillyard's belt dropped and his face turned white.

"So this is where you been hiding! Well, better late than never. Maybe we can even things up a little now." Haggas gave a malicious grin.

Hillyard made a motion to shut the door.

"No, you don't, Grant, not till I get what I came for which is that young lady you're not so clever at concealing on the couch there. Nice little game—this!"

He tried to push past but Hillyard blocked the way.

Haggas' muddy eyes remained composed.

"Ain't any use, Grant. Don't you know the woods is full of people lookin' for this girl? One word from me and you'd be in the hands of the police. How the devil did you trap her out here?"

At this Orma tried to rise.

"He didn't trap me. He saved me, saved my life and I won't leave him."

A coarse laugh from Haggas greeted this announcement. "At his old tricks, I see. But your father's not far away, my dear. One blast of my whistle and he'll be here in no time. We got your pony up on the hill. Better come now."

"Yes," said Hillyard going over to the couch and taking the trembling girl in his arms, "you

must go, child. "She's hurt, Haggas. She fell. If you dare to make any insinuations—"

"Oh, of course you weren't thinking of the money?"

"What do you mean?"

"My, but we're innocent. Weren't at the races yesterday, I suppose."

"Haggas, I never saw this girl till her cry aroused me last night."

"Queer for you to get so excited over a mere stranger. But just to set your mind at rest about the money, let me tell you you're not going to get it. Jimmie Haggas needs it too bad. A promoter's life is not all easy sailing and a few thousand is all I need to set me on my feet. And just in case you don't know something you ought to know, let me tell you that your new acquaintance is no fit associate for a gentleman's son . . . She's a squaw."

Hillyard sprang at the sneering man.

"You lie!"

"Don't!" cried the girl trying to reach Hillyard's side. "Please don't! He speaks the truth, Mr. Hillyard. You understand now. I never can be a lady. I'll go back. I'll never try to jump the fence again." Seeing the unbelief on Hillyard's face she continued. "Don't you believe Mr. Haggas? Don't you recognize me?"

"No, I never saw you before."

"You," she began in imitation of the fortune-teller's drawl, "have not the daring. You dream but you do not climb."

Hillyard's face became still paler.

"Do you believe me now?" she asked.

"Believe you? Oh, but I don't care. Honest to God I don't. Say you'll let me come." And he lifted her in his arms pressing his lips to hers in a fearless, passionate kiss.

"Never!" cried the girl. "Our worlds are separated by the sun, moon and stars. They'll never touch again. Mr. Haggas, help me to my pony, please."

THE months passed by and it was harvest time again. The August moon was full on the river, and a big breed waited in a birch-bark canoe just around The Bend. Orma was slipping softly out of the door when her father laid his hand gently on her shoulder.

"Year's nearly up, girl. The races begin tomorrow. You're not going to disappoint your old Dad, are you?"

"I guess you're beaten, Dad."

The man's face fell. "You're too good for a breed's wife, Orma. That promoter, now, seems a decent sort of chap. You really owe him something, too, for saving your life."

"That—devil!" The girl's face grew dark with passion. "Sorry, Dad, but it's no go. I'm corraled, so to speak. Branded for life. I thought all I had to do was jump the fence,



THE QUILL

but I found out differently. I'd always be brought back like that, Dad. I'm a squaw, but I'm a clean one. If I married Haggas I'd be dirty. I prefer to remain respectable. I'm going to marry Simon Kyoshk tomorrow."

With a half-careless kiss she was gone.

"Orma," called her father.

"No use, Dad. You might just as well give us your blessing."

"But there's something I want to tell you, something I should have told you long ago, but I was afraid—" The echo of his voice returned to him unheard by any ears except his own. Orma heard the door close as she removed her fingers from her ears and broke into a run.

A crackle of branches caused her to stop. A man who had apparently been waiting, stepped out from behind a tree directly in front of her.

"It's only me, Orma," familiarly called a voice which she recognized. It was a voice she loathed. There was something greasy about it. "Nice night for a walk."

She met his words with silence. She stepped aside and attempted to pass. He caught her arm.

"Don't dare to touch me, Jim Haggas."

She looked him straight in the eye as if he were a worm and she was about to trample him underfoot. "I thought I told you months ago—"

"Now, little girl, just let me explain." His tones became smothered.

"You'll explain to Simon if I call."

"If you call, it won't make a particle of difference." Haggas began to smile. "Simon, just at the present moment, is lying with his hands tied behind his back in his canoe. It's just like this . . . I want you to marry me tomorrow and nothing is going to stand in my way. Will you?"

"Marry a dirty coward like you, Jim Haggas? Never!" Her head was thrown back and her eyes held no fear in them, only rage and contempt.

"Easy. Not so fast. Just let me give you the alternative. You know it isn't many white men would honor a girl . . . in your position . . . with an offer of marriage. I know one man who wouldn't, that young devil I found you with last Fall. Awful fond of him, though, weren't you. Sort o' spoiled you for common folk, didn't he. Well, I've been aching to pay off a little score against him for some time. If you won't marry me I'll hand him over to the police. He's wanted on a charge of murder."

The girl's eyes, which had never flinched, began to waver. The heavy face of Haggas,

HIS LADY OF THE STARS

lit up with cupidity, looked sinister and grotesque in the moonlight.

"I happen to know his family in the Old Country, in fact we grew up together, adjoining estates, boyhood chums and all that. Grant's father is a proud old chap. Religion consists in keeping up the family traditions. Grant never would fit into the old man's plans, wanted to stand on his own feet, a boy with ideas, you might say, wanted to paint. They were too much alike to get on together so Grant ran away, came out here to Canada and, well, he never amounted to anything. He and I used to meet occasionally down in Calgary and gamble a bit. And that's where it happened."

"What?"

"The—accident. There was a girl and well—it was me he shot at, but it hit her and she died afterward. He skipped out and they couldn't find him. And I—well, I left about the same time. And as I was the only person who knew anything about the matter, it soon blew over."

"I don't believe you. If he had been guilty he would have gone back."

"Believe me or not, just as you like. Didn't you see how scared he was when he saw me?"

THAT, thought Orma, must have been what Hillyard meant about being a quitter. She could not reason it out. The only thought which filled her mind was that the man she loved might be in danger.

"Seems he's struck luck. Gone back to London with some of his fool pictures, calls one of them, 'His Lady of the Stars,' or some such idiotic name, and all the old critics are making a fuss over him, got his name in all the papers. And—well, as I say, I have a little grudge against him for trying to kill me one time and I'd like to put a damper on this success business. I can imagine what'll happen when old Squire Hillyard learns that his son is to be tried for murder." Haggas laughed fiendishly.

The girl did not hear him. Her heart was leaping within her in fierce, hard throbs. So Hillyard had remembered! He had kept his word. He had dreamed and now he had climbed . . . to the top . . . He was on the summit and it lay within her power . . .

"Once more, and for the last time, Orma,"—Haggas' voice sounded a trifle peremptory—"will you marry me?"

The girl's proud head was thrown back. Her eyes never flinched before his. There was no hesitation in her voice.

"That being the price of refusing, my answer is YES! . . . No, Jim Haggas, don't you dare touch me. Now let me find Simon."



TEN o'clock the next morning found a slim, black-haired girl galloping into the heart of the town, the early sun touching her face with something of triumphant glory. Hours before, she had risen, and, mounting Firefly, had taken the forest trail to the summit where she could see old snow-capped Turtle in the distance. It was the top of the world she saw. She could never reach it but Hillyard was up there. The glory of having climbed was the light she saw encircling his young form. It was that picture she wanted, undimmed, to carry her through the day, and through all the days. When she had filled her eyes with it she turned and rode madly back into town, head up, eyes flashing, fearless and free. Something of the wind she seemed and of the dazzling sunshine and the laughing sky. She tied her pony in front of the magistrate's office where a man stood waiting, a stout fellow with a heavy face and muddy brown eyes.

They went into the office. A little grey man was waiting for them. The solemn ceremony began. Orma's eyes turned to the window which opened toward the foothills. The vision which she saw became strangely confused with a horseman galloping along the dusty road. His horse was tired. He drew up to another figure which was walking along a path, a slouching, loping figure. It was Simon! They were coming together toward the village . . . Like a dream the words of the little grey man sounded far-away and indistinct.

"It is an honorable estate instituted by God—"

The stranger had left Simon behind now and was coming faster. She could hear the horse's hoofs now, beating upon the dry earth. Somehow they seemed nearer and more real than the voice of the little man. She must pay more attention.

"Therefore if any man can show any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together—"

The outer door burst open and like a flash of steel, a voice pierced the hushed air.

"I can!" it said.

GRANT Hillyard stood holding the door with one hand, his hat in the other, calm, and pale with passion.

"Young man, you will kindly explain your presence," said the magistrate drawing himself up to his full height.

Hillyard pointed to the prospective bridegroom.

"You," said he, "are a married man already. You have a wife and children in England—"

"And you," said Haggas fiercely, "are a murderer!"

"Can you prove it?"

"I—er—yes!"

"I can prove that I am not. God knows I got my pay for being a coward. If I had gone back and faced it like a man, in the first place, I would have saved myself months of torture. The girl didn't die, as they feared she would. She was another victim of yours, you—! You sit in that chair and don't move till I'm ready for you."

Turning to the girl whose relief at the interruption of the ceremony was changed into bewildering fear for what was about to happen next, he said gently, "You belong to me now, Orma. I have come for you. Thank God I wasn't a day later. Let us go on with the ceremony."

He laid his hand on her arm but she wouldn't have it.

"What!" he cried. "You do not love—him!" His face became grey with pain and disappointment. "Tell me"—his voice was thick and uneven—"tell me, is it for love you are marrying him?"

She nodded. "I am marrying him for—love."

He started for the door.

Orma turned and saw Simon standing in front of the door. A great light shone on his dark face. He had been so brave and Fate was giving her back to him now. He seemed to realize that his hour had come.

Just as Hillyard was about to pass through the door, Simon caught his arm.

"Don't go, Mr. Hillyard. Wait! I got a right to speak. I love her, too. She ain't lyin' It was fer love she was marryin' this—fella, but it was fer love of—you! She won't marry you 'cause she's not a lady. Would anybody but a lady marry a man she hated to save the man she loved? He threatened her, said he'd tell on you."

Hillyard turned to face the girl whose flaming cheeks convinced him of the truth.

"She's a lady born, too. Her mother told me. The best blood of England flows in her veins. Her father's a lord."

"And the best blood of Canada, too. Simon!" And Hillyard caught the unresisting girl to his breast. "My Lady of the Stars!" he whispered.

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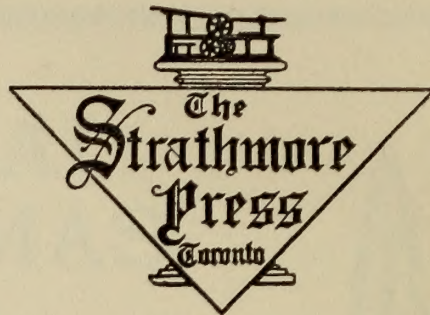
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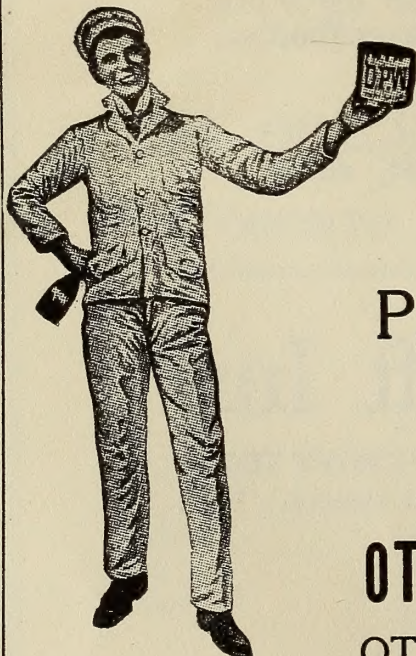
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